

A
B O O K
F O R T H E
A G E D,

Consisting of
Discourses and Devotions
Suited to their
STATE and CONDITION.

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BOOK

FOR THE

ADVERTISEMENT.

MY good Father having finish'd this Essay a little before his Death, which then speedily overtook him, and prevented his own Publication of it; I do here present it to all Pious well disposed People, together with the Dedication, just as he himself had prepared it; not doubting, but that the Aged and well-meaning Reader will take it in good part, and be well satisfied with the Spiritual supplies which are here Admitted.



E. D.

LONDON

To the Right Worshipful

Sir *Stephen Fox* :

The Author humbly presents the
Ensuuing Treatise.

S I R,

I Presume to Dedicate this little Book
to you, not because I think you want
it, but because it rather wants you,
to give some Countenance and In-
couragement to it. You have prevented
my Advice by an early Regular Virtue, and
have long been an eminent Example of the
best Rules that can be given.

You see Sir, it is Addressed to the
Aged, and upon that Account, has some-
what the better Title to your Favour and
Acceptance.

The Dedication.

It has pleased God to preserve you to a good Old Age, and long may He preserve you to His Honour and the good of the Age you live in. You have lived to see four Kings at the least, and have had the Honour to serve them all in Places of the Highest Trust, without the least Blemish or Imputation. Which I think, Sir, I may say, is a Happiness peculiar to your self, and may well be ascribed to a peculiar Exactness and Integrity. And as for the Service of God the great King of All, it must be owned that you have been a zealous Promoter of it: which will easily prove it self to any one who knows the Churches you have Built and Beautified, and the Alms-houses you have Founded and Endowed. My Relation to one of those Churches gives me this Occasion, and I think I ought not in Justice and Gratitude wholly to Conceal such Magnificent Piety and Charity. I believe you had rather do such Things than hear of them; and 'tis like we should never have heard of These, if they had not been too visible to be concealed. But in such an Age, wherein it is Proverbial for People to bless themselves from Building of Churches, such

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such an Example ought not to be lost for want of a just Remembrance. Your Example, Sir, may provoke others to good Works; At least it may serve to shame them into better Forms of Speech; and teach those to Reverence, who cannot Imitate such noble Charities. Such Liberality will be found in the Conclusion, to be the best Husbandry, for by thus laying out your Wealth, you lay up for your self Treasures in Heaven, which will meet you there, and abide by you, when this Earth and all its Treasures shall be Dissolved and Burnt up.

That those True and Durable Riches may be your Portion, is the Unfeigned wish of

SIR,

Your most obliged

Humble Servant,

James Davies.

THE PREFACE.

IT is the Folly of too many, to defer the Thoughts and Care of Religion till they grow Old, Presuming that then it will be Time enough, and upon that Presumption put off their present Amendment. But they who are grown Old already, have no such pretence for Delay, because they have no farther Time to Set; so that what they do must be done presently, or there is great Danger it will never be done at all. It is high Time for such Persons to come into the Lord's Vineyard, now it is towards the latter end of the Day with them. And I am encouraged to call them the rather, because there is now greater Hopes they will listen to good Advice than there was formerly. In their younger Years their Appetites and Passions were strong, and their Judgments weak, and their Consideration little or none at all, but now it is to be hoped they are altered for the better: for Age naturally cools and abates the Heats and Extravagancies of Youth, and produces

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produces Seriousness and Thoughtfulness, as also wariness to prevent the Dangers that Threaten; all which are good Dispositions towards Repentance. So that Age is really an Advantage in divers Respects, if we make a right Use of it; for besides that, it brings good People nearer to their Happiness (which should Recommend it to them) it is agreed on all Hands, that it is apt to make all People *wiser*, by convincing them of their former Errors, and by shewing them the true Shapes of things in the *glass* of Time and Experience.

When the World and its Splendid Objects are advancing towards us (as in Youth) they make a glittering Show, and look Charmingly; but when they are past, and we look behind us after them, they have quite another appearance. Then we begin to have a mean if not an odious Opinion of them, for that Man's Judgment must be very Corrupt, and his Conscience prodigiously hardened, who looking back on his past Follies, does not Condemn them, and wish at least that he had not been guilty of them. And why may not that wish proceed a little farther? Why may it not proceed to serious Reflection and grief of Heart, and endeavours of Amendment, which is the most reasonable and just effect it should produce?

Indeed, there is a Proverbial saying, That *to cure a Dead Man, and make an Old Man wiser, is much alike.* But God forbid that saying should be true. For tho' the Power of

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Customs and Habits is of great Force, yet the Power of Conscience and Conviction, and God's grace is of much greater. If we are true to these latter, and suffer them to have their due Effects upon us, they are sufficient to break the most Inveterate Habits, with as much Ease, as *Samson broke the new Ropes wherewith the Philistines had bound him, when the Spirit of God was upon him, Judg. 16.*

They who are Aged, remember the Mischiefs their Sins have done them all their Lives hitherto, which is a sufficient Reason why they should no longer Addict themselves to them. They have likewise by experience found the Emptiness, Vanity and Vexation of all Worldly Objects and Enjoyments.

If they will not be Admonished by their Teachers, yet they cannot but believe their own Experience, which tells them, that rest and secure Happiness must be in the other World or no where, because they are satisfied it lyes not here. They have found, that for the most part their Troubles have overbalanc'd their Contentments, and tho' their Circumstances have happened to be favourable, yet they are still to seek for a settled State of Rest and Satisfaction.

Time and Age give them warning, that what present Satisfaction they have here, they must soon leave, and exchange them for another Life and State. The Harbingers are come, and give them notice, that Death the King of Terrors is not far behind. Their grey Hair,

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Hair, their falling Teeth, their darkned Eyes, their decayed Appetites and other Symptoms, do all foreſhew that they have not long to abide where they are, but muſt remove into another Country. Thither they can carry with them none of their preſent Earthly Comforts. They can take nothing with them but their Souls and Conſciences; nothing but the ſenſe of their Virtuous or Wicked Deeds; they will be ſet aſhore in the other World, Naked and Deſtitute, if they have not made God their Friend, and if our Bleſſed Saviour does not own them for *his*. If they belong to Him, his Angels will conduct them into places of Reſt and Felicity; but if they do not, they will fall into the hands of Devils, and into ſuch Miſeries and Torments as are unſpeakable.

Aged People who know and believe theſe things, (as all Chriſtians are ſuppoſed to do) cannot eaſily put off the Thoughts of them, chiefly becauſe they are ſo very near to that other World, and within a few ſteps of their Entrance into it.

It is therefore to be hoped that ſuch Perſons will conſider their own Caſe, and that they will bethink them whither they are going, and what is like to become of them, when they leave this World; if they do not, they muſt be worſe than Ordinary, for there are hardly any ſo bad, on whom the Thoughts of *Death* do not make ſome lively Impreſſion. That uſeth to work upon People, when

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no other means can prevail. O Eloquent; Just
and mighty Death; whom none could Advise,
thou hast Persuaded; what none have Dared,
thou hast Done. Thou tel-

Sir Walter Rawleigh, *lest the Proud and Insolent,*
in the last Page of his *that they are but Abjects,*
History of the World. *and humblest them at an*

Instant, making them Cry, Complain and Re-
pent; as a great Man speaks, whom long
Imprisonment, and the near Prospect of Death,
had advanced to great Degrees of Wisdom
and Seriousness.

I trust therefore, by the Blessing of God,
that Aged Persons, many of them at least,
will be moved with the near Prospect of
Death and Eternity, and that they will heark-
en to Charitable Advice, to prepare whilst
their short Day lasts, for the great things which
are coming upon them.

To this End I have Composed this little
Treatise, to furnish such Persons, (especially
the meaner sort) with such Directions and
Devotions, as may be, in some measure,
helpful to them. And herein I hope to par-
take of the Benefit with them; not only by
bettering my own Account, by the good I
do others; but also by using my own Advice,
and reflecting on my own Age, which calls
upon me to make haste, and to get me ready,
against the Approaching Time, when my Lord
and Master shall call.

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(1)

B O O K

F O R T H E

A G E D.

C H A P. I.

Of Man's Age, and the several Periods of it.

WHETHER GOD Created Man at the first to an Earthly Immortality, is a Question which may admit of some Debate; but 'tis certain, that after he had Sinned, he was Doom'd to Dye: for so GOD tells him, Gen. 3. 19. *Dust thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou return.* Yet the Sentence was not immediately executed upon him, but there were several Stages of Life appointed for him to run through, before he came to the end of it. These Stages of Life are variously limed and distinguished; but the Periods most generally known and received, are Infancy, Childhood,

Youth, Manhood, and Old Age. Of these some are shorter and some longer; but when they precisely begin and end, is not so easie to Determine. We know when Infancy begins, but not so of old Age, which creeps upon us insensibly and without Observation. We cannot tell the Minute of its arrival, but we feel when it is come by the Effects; and we are sure it will not leave us, till we depart together with it.

Indeed the whole Progress of Man's Age, is a kind of Mystery, of which he himself understands but very little. We know not how we are formed in the Womb, or how we grow up and our Stature is increased. We are told in the Gospel, *we can add nothing to it*, neither do we know how the Food is Prepared and Assimilated in the dark Caverns of our Bodies. Herein we resemble the Plants and the Corn in the Field, of which our Saviour saith, *that it grows up night and day we know not how*, Mark 4. 27. the whole Operation is performed within us, and yet we know nothing at all of it, which as it is a manifest proof of our Ignorance, so it is no less an Evidence of the secret Direction of a Wisdom superiour to ours.

It must be acknowledged to be some Disparagement to our present Mortal State, that there are so many things within us and about us, that are unknown to us; as on the other hand it mightily recommends the future State, that therein all the Secrets of Nature and Providence which now seem such Riddles to us, will be clearly unfolded and explained.

Among other things, Time it self, by which our Lives and the several Periods of them are measured, is a thing of dark and difficult Speculation. It may fitly be called a Speculation, for it has no other Being that appears, but only in our Minds and Conceptions. It has no real Existence in any part of the Universe, but is a *Creature* of our Minds, springing up from the Relation betwixt Beings and the continuance of them, which continuance we measure in our Thoughts by the Daily and Yearly Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies; and therefore we measure our Lives, as *Jacob* did his, by Days and Years, that is, according as those Revolutions are finished and begin again. How many of these *Rounds* pass over us we can observe, and by them we reckon and compute our *Age*, and the Duration of it.

The Original Grant for the Duration of Man's Life was of GOD's Institution and Appointment. *Is there not an appointed time for Man upon Earth*, Job 7. 1. which implies that his Time is appointed, and that there is a Limitation upon him which he shall not exceed. Yet this Limitation is not so strict and precise, but that it may and has been altered. For we find, that the general Age of Man has been twice or thrice removed and varied since the Creation. In the beginning of the World, before the Earth was well Peopled, the Age of Man lasted to near a Thousand Years. After the Flood, till the Earth was well Peopled again, it commonly lasted some Hundreds, but after-

Of Man's Age, and the

afterwards about the Time of *Moses*, it was Contracted to Seventy Years; tho' particular Constitution, Diet, and Accidents make some Variation.

And as Man's Age is Limited and Appointed, so is the Age of other Creatures also.

Trees according to their several kinds, thrive and grow so long, after which they increase no longer; but seem first to stand at a stay, and within a while after, gradually Decay and Perish.

Animals likewise according to their kinds, have their Limited Duration, whereof the

Natural Historians give us some Account. Some of the living Creatures much exceed others in Duration, and some again are but of short continuance; the Elephant,

the Hart, the Eagle, and the Raven are said to live long; whereas Sheep and Domestick Animals are but short-lived in comparison; and generally Insects grow up and Dye within the Compass of the same Year. We can Assign no other cause of this Difference, but that it proceeds from the Primitive Order and Institution of GOD. In like manner, what it is that causeth the several Turns in Man's Age; first from Weakness to Strength and Vigour, and then from these back again to Weakness and Debilities, is a secret depending on the same Wisdom and good Pleasure. GOD has given us such a Temperament of Body as may probably last so long, and when that Time is expired,

expired, the Temperament grows weak and out of Order, and within a while after, falls wholly to Decay and Dissolution.

This is the general Constitution of all Sublunary things; they last for a while, and then lose their present Beings and return to their Principles again.

I mentioned only Sublunary things, but the Scripture tells us farther, that the *Heavens themselves were old like a garment*, *Psalm 102. 26.* and that they shall be changed and cease to be what they now are. 'Tis not to be doubted, but this is the Old Age of the World; and as Old Age is the last Stage of Man's Life, so it *may likely be of the World's continuance.*

In the computation of Man's Life, Old Age may be reckoned to take up about the Seventh part of it, that is, from Sixty to Seventy Years.

* And it is very probable, that allowing the same proportion to the Old Age of the World, that Seventh part is in great Measure already expired.

* Some reckon otherwise, that the *prima Senectus* begins at 50, and reaches to 65, and the *extrema Senectus*, or latter part of Old Age, reaches from thence to the end of our Days.

Of this Contemplation, a good Use may be made to comfort and satisfy us under the sense of our Mortality. For as all the former Generations of the World are gone before us, so the World it self shall follow after us; and that should not seem ankind or uncomfortable, when every thing has undergone, or must undergo as well as our selves.

6 *Of the Meditation of Death,*

Nay, these great Changes contain a great deal of Comfort in the consideration of them. For as there is reason to believe, that the end of the World does not import the utter Destruction or Annihilation of it, but the Alteration of its present Scheme and Fashion into another, which shall be more commodious to serve the future Designs of Providence; so we believe and are assured, that the End of good People, is the Beginning of their Happiness, and in Order to their Translation to a better Life and State. Which Contemplation affords to every good Christian a joyous and delightful Prospect.

CH A P. II.

Of the Meditation of Death, and the Benefits thereof.

AGE looks towards Death, and is a very fit Remembrancer of it, in which respect it doth us a kind Office, and is a friendly and faithful Monitor, for what can be more friendly and kind, than to put us in mind of that, the Thoughts of which naturally tend to make us Wise and Good?

The Philosophers therefore highly recommended the Meditation of Death, and advised to dwell upon the Thoughts of it continually. Nay, some of them made it the very Definition of their Philosophy, That it was the Meditation of Death. And the Princes and Great

Men of the World, even in the Times of Heathenism, thought it a thing not to be forgotten, divers of them using to have a Death's-Head served in at their Tables. Some Libertines indeed, (as namely *Petronius*) Interpret their custom to another purpose, as tho' it were intended to promote Luxury and Sensuality, that since they must Dye, and had not long to attend to those Enjoyments, therefore they should Ply them the more earnestly the time they lasted.

But this seems to be a forc't Construction, and the perverting of that which doubtless was at first intended to the contrary. And this seems to be confirm'd by a like Custom, but more Verbal and Express, when at their Feasts they had an Officer to pronounce with a loud voice, to this effect, *Remember that thou art Mortal and must Dye.*

Certainly nothing in the World, Ministers more to the purposes of Religion and Virtue, than this one single Contemplation of Death; for he who considers it as he ought, will find the whole Chain of Virtues linked together in it. He will find for Instance, that he has reason to wean himself from the World; because he sees he must leave it, he will accustom himself to be Modest and Humble, because he sees he is but Dust; he will learn to have a mean Regard for the Body and its Entertainments, which within a while must cease, and cannot be any longer gratified. He will moderate his desires and pursuits after the Wealth

and Possessions of the World, because Death will shortly Dispossess him and turn him out of all. He will avoid Quarrels, Contentions and Animosities, for what should one Possrherd of Earth strive with another, when both are so liable to be broken? He will see the greatest reason and necessity of serving and pleasing God, because He alone can stand his Friend at that Desolate Season, when all other Comforts will forsake him.

In short, there is no Virtuous Course which this Consideration will not help to promote, nor any vicious Custom which it will not help to break and abolish.

When People come within the view and prospect of Death, how Devout and Serious are they? and if they would keep the Thoughts of it always in their Minds, it would be the Means to keep them always so.

For this cause we may suppose it is, that the Wise and Good GOD puts on humane Affections, earnestly wishing and desiring, that his People would be so wise as to consider this matter, *Oh that my people were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* Deut. 32. 29. Surely there must be a great Deal of Excellency and Advantage in that, which GOD himself seems so passionately and earnestly to desire and wish for.

Again, if we consider the Effects and Consequences of Death, there is nothing that can tend more to the Advancing of Piety and Virtue, for nothing but these last, are of any Va-

love or Regard, on the other side the Grave. How great, how rich, how fair, how fortunate you have been, is not at all regarded there. The Rich Glutton had no Respect shewed him for his Quality in the other World. There *Lazarus* was preferred and he was neglected and tormented. And so it will be with all other Persons in that World; they shall be valued, not according to their former external Ornaments, but according to their Intrinsic Worth and Goodness. They shall be respected as far as they bear the Image of God; but if they have none of his Image upon them, they cannot have any Inheritance among his Children.

I mentioned the Consequences of Death, which we must again resume and consider. To Dye would be no great matter, if it were not for *these*; To quit an infirm Corruptible Body, subject to so many Wants, Ailments and Pains; to leave a miserable naughty World, full of Wickedness, Perplexity and Trouble; this in it self should rather seem a Benefit, than any Loss or Injury to most People; but there are such things that accompany and follow after Death, as alter the Case, and make it the most Important awful thing in the World, for Judgment and Eternity follow after Death, and if these are not things of Moment, we cannot tell what are.

First, we are to give an Account of our selves to GOD, the Great and Sovereign Judge; and what Excellent Lessons doth this Consideration

ration teach us? should we not be willing to do somewhat that is Excellent and Praiseworthy, that we may be Accepted and Commended by Him? and shall we not Dread to be found Guilty in his Presence? The Shame on the one Hand, and the Praise on the other, are Considerations very Valuable. But besides, there are farther Consequences yet behind, and that is the Recompence Men's Actions will meet with, either by way of Reward or Punishment.

This is Fundamental in all Governments, to reward those who do well and punish the Evil doers. 'Tis eminently so in GOD's Government, who hath declared that he will render to every Man according to his Deeds, *Rom. 2. 6.* He will Reward his Faithful Servants, and the Reward will be such, as will more than answer their poor Services. Nay, it will be greater than their Thoughts or Wishes can amount to; the Reward is said to be a Crown and a Kingdom, even the Kingdom of Heaven: to dwell in the Presence of GOD and our Saviour, and there to Live and Reign for ever. All the particulars of that Happiness we cannot distinctly know at this distance; but we know that GOD has made to his Servants *exceeding great and precious Promises*, and that He will not fail in the full Accomplishment of them. All the Holy Joys and Divine Pleasures that can be thought on (and more than we can now think on) are comprised within the Compass of that Blessed and Happy State.

And

And why then should we not be moved and perswaded to use all possible Religious Diligence, that we may attain to that unspeakable Blessedness? In other Cases we are Diligent enough and refuse no Pains, where there is Profit and Advantage to be gotten by it: Let us not be more slothful in our Religious Endeavours, when we have a Motive vastly greater to encourage us.

On the other Hand, most People according to their Ordinary Measures, are apt to forbear venturing, where they see there is evident Hazard or Danger. They are wary enough for the most part, not to do any thing that shall make them be thrown into Goal, or expose them to the Temporal Penalties of the Law. They consider that if they commit such and such Crimes, they shall be Fined or they shall be Imprisoned, or they shall be Burnt in the Hand or the Cheek, or perhaps they shall be Sentenced and Condemned to the Gallows; and every Body will grant, that this is well and wisely considered: and shall we not be so wise and wary as to consider the endless Punishments which God hath threatned? there is greater Reason we should be affected and concerned at these latter, for Temporal Punishments are nothing in comparison of these.

To be Burnt in the Hand, or put to Death, is a pain that is over in a few Minutes, but it is not so in the Punishments of the other World. The Sentence there will be, Depart

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ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels, Mat. 25. 41. Perpetual Imprisonment during this short Life, is lookt upon as a Dismal Sentence; but what is that in Comparison of the Torments of Hell, that infernal and eternal Prison? What is it in Comparison of the Torments of Fire, and the Company of Devils for ever? 'Tis frightful to speak of such a State, but how Intolerable will it be to fall into it? All People are afraid of Devils, by a Natural and Universal Antipathy, and every Body likewise Dreads the Torments of Fire, as being most exquisite and intolerable, and what can we think then of that Misery, which is compounded of both these, that is, of everlasting Fire, and such Hellish Company?

Let not these be thought to be common Scares and Bugbears devised to amuse and keep the World in Order: for as sure as there are Devils, and as sure as we see the Fire before us; so sure will the *Effect* of this Denunciation of our Saviour be verified upon every ungodly Impenitent Person.

He who thinks on Death as he should, must take all these consequences of it into his Thoughts, and he who does so, will see, that the Meditation of Death hath all the Force that any Argument can have, to restrain him from doing Wickedly, and to engage him to all Virtue and Godliness of Living.

Of Man's chief End and Business in this World.

A Lmighty GOD made Man at the first that He might Communicate his Goodness to him, and that in a Sense of that Goodness, Man might be moved to love Honour and Obey his Maker.

So that here are two Particulars, one of which is inferred from the other, to wit, God's Goodness and Man's Duty.

GOD's Goodness was eminently shewed, in that He made Man an Understanding and Happy Creature; for He made him in His own Image; He made him Upright and Innocent; betwixt which Quality and Happiness, there is such a close and natural Connection, that they cannot easily be separated.

To this Happiness GOD was pleased to add Immortality of Being, that Man might continue happy if it were not his own Fault, which Addition was necessary to complete GOD's Bounty: for that Happiness is mean and inconsiderable, and so likewise is that Being, which lasts only for a Term or Season, and then vanishing, leaves the Subject either to Annihilation or Misery.

These were some of the high Privileges and Perfections of Man's Nature, most of which were exemplified at his first setting out into the World. For he was plac'd in a Paradise, in the midst of many Earthly Conveniences and

and Delights. And moreover he enjoyed that high and happy Priviledge of having Acquaintance and Communion with G O D.

It were happy if the Story of Man's Creation ended here, and that there were no more to be added to it; but the Sorrowful part is behind; for Man continued not in his State of Innocency, but by the Instigation of the Devil and his own Sinful Complacency, lost all this Happiness, and plung'd himself into a Deplorable and Miserable Condition. He did not consider that his Happiness was Conditional, and that it was expressly limited by G O D to his Obedience. G O D commanded him at first, not to Eat of that Tree, which was a moderate and easie Command: and his not obeying, when he might easily have done it, was his inexcusable Fault; for which he was turn'd out of Paradise, lost his Innocency and was deprived of most of the Comforts and Ornaments of his Being. He regarded not to pay unto G O D that little Tribute of Obedience, by which he held his rich and plentiful Estate, and therefore he Forfeited the whole, and was reduc'd to an Estate of various and unspeakable Misery.

Howbeit G O D of his Infinite Pity, did not wholly abandon Mankind, but promised to Save and Redeem them, by the Incarnation and Passion of God the Son. This was as it were, a new Creation, whereby Mankind was restored to a new Capacity of Happiness. The Son of God undertook to satisfy the Offended Justice

Justice of his Father on Man's Behalf, and to Acquit and Discharge him by taking the Punishment upon himself: by which means He rescued the Sons of Men from Misery and Destruction, and recovered the greatest part of their Happiness again.

But still this was done with the former Reservation, that is, if Men will obey and please GOD. The Condition is still the same, neither is there any Pardon or Reconciliation to be had upon any other Terms.

Indeed this seems to be GOD's Design, as well in the Work of Creation as Redemption; not only to advance the Good of His Creatures, but also to advance Goodness and Holiness among them. These Qualities have an Original Excellency in them. They are Excellencies and Perfections of the Divine Nature; the Image and Imitation of which Properties GOD requires in his Rational Creatures; and indeed prefers these Excellencies before all his Creatures divested of them, and separate from them. Accordingly we find, that God destroyed the greatest part of Mankind with a Flood, because of their Wickedness, that is, because they were departed from all Sense and Regard of Holiness and Goodness.

That to restore these, was one main Design of Christ's Redemption, the Scripture generally teaches. So we are told, *Titus 2. 14. Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good works; And*

2 Cor. 5. 15. *he dyed for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who dyed for them and rose again.*

Hence it is that under the several Dispensations of God's Grace unto Men, there has always been a particular care taken to uphold the Honour of Religion, and the Practice of Vertue. Under the Legal Dispensations the Ten Commandments were enjoined, which comprehend the great Duties of love to God and Justice and Charity to Men. The first Commandment contains the former of these, as our Saviour recites it, *Matth. 22. 37. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength;* this is the first and great Commandment. Indeed those very words, are not set down in the first Commandment, nor any where else in the Book of Exodus, which was the first Copy of the Law, but we find them more than once in *Deuteronomy*, which is the Repetition and Explication of the Law, and of the Internal and Spiritual Duties of it; particularly *Deut. 6. 5.* we have those words of our Saviour. And *Deut. 10. 12, 13.* the Love of GOD is explained by fearing him, and serving him, and keeping his Commandments. Our Love to GOD who is so infinitely above us, is best express'd, not by Fondness and Familiarity, as is usual among Men, but by an Humble and Awful Obedience. And accordingly the beloved Disciple tells us, *2 Joh. 6. This is love that we keep his Commandments.*

There

There are divers other parts of the Duty we owe to GOD, which are excellently put together in our Church Liturgy. *To believe in him, to fear him, to worship him, to give him thanks, to put our whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of our life.*

These Duties are a great part of our Business in this World, and by accustomed our selves to the practice of them, we shall by Degrees inure our selves to the business of the other World, which in great measure consists in the practice of the same. For to Love, Worship, Honour, Obey, and praise God and our Saviour, is the continual exercise of an innumerable Company of Blessed Spirits in those Happy Regions above, and will be so for ever.

There is likewise a Duty that we owe to our Neighbour, the Substance whereof is contained in that Golden Rule of our Saviour, *That we should do to others, as we desire they should do to us.* Wherein are comprehended the several Duties of Justice, Honesty, Benevolence, Kindness, Meekness, Forgiveness, and all the Virtues of Commerce and Conversation. Particularly we are obliged to do all the good we can as we have opportunity, for that (according to our little Capacities) makes us like unto God, which is the highest excellency we are capable of, and that which mightily recommends us to his Love and Favour.

Contrary to these are Pride, Injustice, Theft, Fraud, Falshood; as also Envy, Malice, Revenge, and divers such like wicked qualities which have a natural Obliquity and Deformity in them, and set us at the greatest distance from God.

Lastly, Our Duty in respect of our selves consists in a pure, chaste, modest, sober, temperate, patient Behaviour. That we deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts; and govern our Appetites and Passions by the Rules of Reason and Religion.

I mention these Duties somewhat more particularly, That you may know how you have discharged them, and wherein you have Offended; and that you may not deceive your selves with vain Presumptions. For this is certain that God will not forgive or save any Person, who continues in an ungodly disobedient course. He is willing to forgive us our Sins, and to be reconciled to us for his Son's sake, which is the Grace of the Gospel-Covenant) but it is upon Condition that we forsake our Sins, and walk before him in newness of Life. You cannot be recovered or restored upon any other Terms; for Happiness is the Reward of Holiness and Obedience (the Grace of Christ covering the Defects and Imperfections thereof) and it would be very unjust and unreasonable, for Persons to expect or hope for the Reward, who never did, nor ever will do any part of the Work, to which the Reward is Annexed and Promised.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Tryal and Examination of our selves.

THE Service of GOD and a Religious walking before Him, being our great End and Business (as before was shewed) we should consider and see how well we have answered this End of our Being. And herein it is to be feared, most People are very faulty and defective. They are but a few who are so happy, as to remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth, and to walk regularly in his ways, without turning aside into forbidden Paths. The forbidden Fruit is so grateful to the Eye, and to the Appetite, that 'tis hard to forbear tasting of it: especially in this our fallen State, wherein Nature must be granted to be more Temptable and Frail, than it was at the Beginning, before Corruption made a Breach upon it. For now corrupt Inclination sides with and seconds Temptation, and helps it, with a new Additional Power to prevail.

Tho' we are or may be Able, to resist all our Enemies, by using our own Powers aright, and imploring God's Grace for our Assistance, yet 'tis hard for us to exert and put forth the utmost of our Strength and Vigour, against an Enemy that looks so like a Friend, and is so insinuating and pleasing to us.

Our Wills are at first so Flexible and Irresolute, and Temptations so Insinuating, that 'tis very difficult to keep steadfast to our Duties, tho' we know it. The Devil suggests, and sollicit, and the World proposes and invites, and the Flesh covets and instigates; which is such a Combination, as is very hard to be denyed or withstood.

This is too frequently the Case of the younger sort, before they come to consider their Danger, and before they have had Experience of the Muchievousness and Deceitfulness of Sin. They are overcome as *Samson* was by *Dalilah*; by the Charms of Beauty, and the Impotunity of Lust and Corruption, by which means they are Betrayed into the Hands of the Enemy, and undergo all the Mockery, Slavery, and Misery of Conquered Captives.

They are inveigled sometimes by Pleasures, and sometimes by Profits, and by other various sorts of Temptations, till at last they yield, and become Accessary to their own Undoing.

These Syrens, with their Beauty and Musick, bewitch them into their Embraces, and when they have them there, 'tis hard and almost impossible, to get away from them without being Devoured. Thus (as the Story goes) it happened to divers of *Ulysses's* Companions, who gazing and listening to those deceitful Monsters, were surprized and eaten up by them. But he himself being a

Person

Person of Age and Experience, when he pass
by theſe Dem, choſe to be tyed to the Main
of his Ship, and would not be looſed from
thence, till he was paſt the hearing of their
Melody. So ought all good People to do,
who know the Danger of their Paſſage thro
this World: they ought to tie themſelves
with the ſtronger Cords of Reason and
Reſolution, that they may not be Over-
come with its Charming and Bewitching Va-
nities.

You who are Aged will be better able to
do this, becauſe you have found by Experi-
ence, that there is nothing but Shew and De-
cel, in thoſe Flattering Objects and Enjoy-
ments. The Momentary Pleaſure is fled and
gone, but the guilt remains; the Sorrow and
Bitterneſs whereof, vailly outweighs the Eſ-
ſential Satisfaction. To the Truth of this, you
are no Strangers, and therefore, in common
Prudence, you ſhould Reſolve to be abuſed
and cheated no longer. You ought to do what
in you lies, to recover your ſelves, and take
heed for the future, that you be not ſo Danger-
ouſly impoſed upon.

But then, in Order to your Cure and Recov-
ery, you muſt undergo a Religious Diet,
which may likely at firſt, ſeem ſomewhat
harſh and tedious. You muſt Renact your
Errors, and endeavour to undo what you
have done by Diſlike and Repentance. You
muſt ſearch backward into your Lives, and
where you find you have Tranſgreſſed your Duty

to GOD or Man, or Offended through the Misgovernment of your selves, you must with Shame and Sorrow bewail it, and earnestly beg GOD's Mercy for your Pardon.

Endeavour to Imitate the Example of St. Paul, who of a Blasphemer, and a Persecutor, and Injurious, became a zealous and faithful Servant of Christ, 1 Tim. 1. 23. Imitate St. Peter's Repentance, who after the Denial of his Gracious Lord and Master, wept out and wept bitterly. And as they never any more were guilty of those Sins, so do you resolve, and Watch, and Pray, and Endeavour, that you may never Return to yours any more, but instead thereof, Return unto GOD, and apply your selves with all your Might to the Duties of Religion; that is, make it your Business to Worship GOD in Publick and in Private; be diligent in Reading and Hearing his Word; be careful to live Soberly, Honestly, Peaceably. Endeavour to do all the good you can in the World, and do it in Obedience to GOD, whose Divine Command it is.

This is true Religion; and if you Endeavour to Discharge your Duty in the Practice of it, GOD will be so Gracious, as to Pardon your past Offences, and accept you into his Service, which is such a Preferment, as if you abide in it, will make you Rich and Happy ever after.

where you had you have Transgressed your Duty
must teach backward into your Lives and
have done by Dislike and Repentance.

CHAP. V.

A Form of Prayer and Humiliation, to be used by an Aged Person, desiring to Repent and Turn to God.

O GOD the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, I fall down before Thee in an humble sorrowful sense of my Wretchedness and Unworthiness; for to my Shame and Sorrow I must Acknowledge, that I have wofully Transgressed against thy Sovereign Authority, and broken thy most Just and Righteous Laws, whereby I ought to be governed. Thou hast sent me into the World to do Thee Honour and Service, but I have dishonoured Thee, and served divers Lusts and Pleasures. These I ought to have Subdued and Mortified, but instead of that, I have Loved and Pursued them, and yielded my self a willing Captive to them, instead of Purifying my self, and recovering from the Corruptions of Nature, I have Plung'd my self more into them, and Drown'd all the Serious Thoughts of my Soul in Sensuality or Worldly Business. I ought (as I engaged in my Baptism) to have renounc'd the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, so as not to have followed nor been led by them; but I have Complied with them all, and have been Wofully led away by their Allurements and Temptations. My Business is to cleanse my self from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, but I have grievously defiled my Soul with

A Form of Prayer to be

with Wicked Thoughts, and Unworthy Desires, and my Body with Vicious Gratifications, and Excessive Enjoyments.

ALL this, I have done in the Madness of my Youth; and not only then, but at other times since, when I ought to have had more Sense and Goodness.

And all this while, thou hast not ceased to call me by thy Word, and by thy Providence, but I have turned the deaf Ear, resisting thy Grace, and despising thy most precious Promises and dreadful Threatnings.

O LORD, I am grieved and ashamed at these my ways; and Blessed be thy Name, I begin to see the Odiousness and taste the Bitterness of them. My Convictions break in upon my Spirit, and my Guilt lies heavy upon my Soul. My Conscience cannot but Accuse and Condemn me, much more mightest Thou Condemn me, to all the Pains and Miseries of Hell. There I must have my Portion, and be Tormented for ever, if thy Mercy do not save and deliver me.

Blessed be thy Mercy, that thou hast spared me hitherto, and hast exercised so long Patience towards me. Blessed be Thy Name, that I have not sinned away all Sense of Goodness, and that I am not past all Hope of Recovery, and that Death and Hell have not shut their Mouth upon me. Blessed be thy Name, that thou hast not utterly abandoned and rejected me, but followest me still with the Offer of thy Grace, and movest me to return.

Behold.

Behold, O LORD, I return to Thee with a Broken and Contrite Heart, beseeching Thee for thy Sons sake, whom Thou hast set forth to be a Propitiation for the Sins of the World, to have Mercy upon me. O let my Sins be blotted out by his Blood, because I believe in Him for the Remission of Sins.

Such are the Wonders of thy Mercy, that thou invitest the greatest of Sinners to return and live. Oh that I may so turn, that I may be capable of Life and Mercy. That I may utterly Renounce and forsake every Wicked way to which I have been Accustomed, and may never any more return unto it. This is the unfeigned Desire of my Soul, which I beseech Thee to make Effectual by thy Grace.

And I beseech Thee, O LORD for thy Goodness Sake, to accept me at last into thy Service, which I have so long and so grievously neglected. I am most unworthy, I confess, to serve Thee, having served my Lusts so long; but Thou art still my Father, and art willing to meet a Returning Prodigal. My Soul blest Thee, O Jesus, for that Glorious Example and Precedent of Mercy Recorded in thy Gospel, and for the Comfort and good Hope it Ministreth to me. I return with Confession and grief of Heart as he did; and be Thou pleased, O GOD, to receive and embrace me with the Compassions of a Father, for the Merits of thy Holy and Immaculate Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Our Father, &c.

C H A P. VI.

Of Renovation and Amendment.

HE who is sensible that he has spent a great part of his Day in a wrong Way, must shift his Road, or he cannot expect to come to his Journeys End. None can reasonably hope to go to Heaven in their Vices. They must forsake These, and Practice the contrary Virtues, before they can be capable of arriving at that Place of Supreme Happiness.

This Change is in Scripture called Regeneration, and Conversion, and Renovation. And tho' God converts and renews us, yet he does it in such a Manner, that it seems to be wholly our own Act and Deed. And therefore we must do what we can to Co-operate with his Grace, otherwise, if the Change be not wrought, the Blame will lye upon our selves.

You remember what you were formerly in your Unregenerate State. Such no Doubt as the Apostle describes, *Titus 3. 3. foolish; disobedient; deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* But if you are truly Penitent, you must Forsake and Amend these grievous Faults; for *there is no true Repentance without Amendment.*

So that instead of being Disobedient, you must become Obedient; and instead of serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, you must Mortify your Lusts, and deny your unlawful Pleasures.

Perhaps you cared not for GOD, nor regarded his Worship; or if you happened sometimes out of Custom to join in it, it was irksome to you, and you thought the Time lost that was so spent. But if your Heart be truly Affected with a Religious Sense, you will be otherwise minded. You will see, that there is no Time so well spent, as when we Converse with GOD in Holy Duties. For when our Minds are with Him, they are at Home, and about their Main Business, and all other things are but Trifles in Comparison.

So that you must be changed first in your Judgments and Opinions, and then in your Affections and Practices.

First your Judgments must be changed and renewed. The Judgments and Opinions of Carnal Unregenerate Men, are Corrupt and Naught for the most part.

They think that to serve God, and attend to the Duties of Religion, is little to their purpose (as before was said) they think it a vain and idle thing to disturb themselves with the Thoughts of another World, and in the mean while to Deprive themselves of the Delights and Complacencies of this. They think it much more to their purpose, to gratify their

Desires,

Desires, and comply with their Carnal Interests and Inclinations. What is Religion to them, that they should be disturbed by its Rules and Precepts, and be curbed and restrained thereby from their beloved Courses and Enjoyments.

This is truly the Case of Unregenerate Men. They have no Regard in their Thoughts of God, neither have they any good Opinion of his ways.

To this purpose, *St. Paul* confesseth of Himself before his Conversion, *Act. 26. 9. I verily thought I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.* It was his real Opinion, that the Christian Religion was a foolish Novel Doctrine, and that there was nothing in it but an unnecessary Troublesome Strictness and Severity, but when by G O D's Grace he was Converted, he was quite of another Opinion: inasmuch that he was ready to lay down his Life for the Name of Christ, as at last he Actually did. Then the Religious Strictness, which the Christian Religion required, was most welcome and acceptable to him, and he thought himself Happy, when he denied himself, that he might obey the Laws and Injunctions of the Lord Jesus.

You see how his Mind and Opinion was Changed, and so must yours be too, if you will make any Progress in the School of Christ. You must entertain other Notions of Happiness than what Flesh and Blood teaches, and

and be convinced of the utter insufficiency of all Worldly Enjoyments to that End. You must be convinced, that GOD and his Service and his Promises, are the Main things you have to Depend on, and that nothing else is of any worth or value in Comparison.

Again, your Affections must be renewed and changed in great Measure. For whereas the Love, and Joy, and Delight of Vicious Unregenerate Men, runs altogether upon Pleasure, and Profit, and upon Sensual Objects and Enjoyments; these Affections ought to be quite otherwise Placed and Employed. You must Love and Prefer GOD before all other things (as was before said) you must delight in those things that are Pure and Excellent and Praise-worthy. You must delight your selves in the Law of GOD, as David so often professeth he did, *Psalm 119.* You must be able to say with St. Paul, *Rom. 5. 11. we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the Atonement.* And Verse 2. of that Chapter, *we rejoice in hope of the glory of God again.* And again, *2 Cor. 1. 12. our rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in this World.*

So that you must Rectify your former youthful mistakes in this Matter. For whereas you formerly did as the young Man is said to do, (so as the Wise Man ironically seems to exhort him to do) *Eccles. 11. 9. Rejoyce, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy heart cheer thee*

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in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the way of thy Heart, and in the sight of thy Eyes. Instead of thus doing, you must now turn your Affections another way, as we find the Wise Man did in his latter time; For after he had rambled over all the Creatures for Delight and Satisfaction, (as we see in that Book) he settles in Religion at last, and concludes after a diligent Enquiry and long Experience, vers. 13. of that Chapter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.* Which last Words strictly Translated, are observed to run thus; *for this is the whole of Man.* As much as to say, That the fear of GOD, and keeping his Commandments, is Man's whole Interest and Business, is his only main Concernment; the Sum and Abridgement of his Happiness.

Lastly, Renovation and Amendment, imply a Change in the Habits and Practices of Men, as far as they have been Vain or Sinful. This followeth of course from the former; for when Men's Judgments and Affections are Reformed their Practices will be so too. For the Will is the great Principle of Action, and where that is guided by a right Reformed Judgment, as it ought to be, the Actions cannot be amiss. For the One is as the Tree and the other as the Fruit: and as it is Natural for the Fruit to savour of the Tree, so 'tis not less Natural for good Words, and good Deeds, to spring from good Principles and Affections.

To

To this purpose our Saviour saith, *Mat. 12.*
33. make the Tree good and his Fruit good, or
else make the Tree corrupt, and his Fruit cor-
rupt; And again, verse *35. A good man out of*
the good Treasure of his Heart bringeth forth
good things, and an evil man out of the evil Treas-
ure of his Heart bringeth forth evil things. The
Heart is the Root of all; if that be pure and
good, there is no Fear but good Fruit will
spread and be diffused throughout the Life and
Actions.

This great Change whereof we have been
 speaking is fitly Illustrated by St. Paul in divers
 places. Particularly *1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Be not deceived,*
neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers,
nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with
Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor
Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners shall
Inherit the Kingdom of God.

Here is a Black Catalogue of Vices set down
 and charged upon the Corinthians, for he saith,
 verse *11. and such were some of you; but then*
it followeth, but ye are Washed, but ye are
Sanctified, but ye are Justified, in the Name of
our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our
God.

A remarkable passage we have likewise, *Eph. 2.*
1, 2, 3. and you hath he quickned who were dead
in Trespasses and Sins, wherein in time past ye
walked according to the course of this World,
according to the Prince of the power of the Air,
the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of
disobedience, amongst whom also we all had our
Conversa-

Conversation is times past, in the Lusts of the Flesh, fulfilling the desires of the Flesh, and of the Mind, and were by Nature Children of Wrath even as others, but God who is rich in Mercy has quickned us, &c. Here was a remarkable Turn, from some of the foulest Vices, to quing another kind of Behaviour. And again, Gal 3: 5: 8. Mortify therefore your Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence and Covetouſneſs which is Idolatry, in which ye alſo walked ſometimes when ye lived in them. But now ye alſo put off all theſe, Anger, Wrath, Malice, Blaſphemy, filthy Communication out of your Mouth.

The Nature of the Conversion and Renovation of a Sinner cannot be better explained than from theſe Texts, by which it plainly appears that it conſiſts in the Relinquishing of the corrupt Courſes Men have formerly been Addicted to, and the Practicing of the contrary for the future.

That this is a reaſonable as well as a neceſſary Method, cannot be denied by any one who rightly conſiders it. For no Man can think, that Carnal, Vicious, Ungodly Perſons, ſuch, and continuing to be ſuch, can be fit for the Favours of GOD, or the Enjoyment of his Promiſes, No Man was ever yet ſo Fooliſh as to entertain ſuch a Thought. But heſtin GOD declares his Wonderful Goodneſs, that they who have been ſuch, if they

will cease, and give over, and become better, may attain to that Blessedness.

This is such gracious and favourable dealing, that more cannot in Modesty be asked, or desired. For can you think it fit, that GOD should forgive you, unless you give over to Offend and Provoke Him? Do you, or can you think that his Patience and Goodness, should always be enslaved to your Vices? You do not think it reasonable to forgive any Person who Offends you, as long as he continues to Offend and Injure you. Therefore Judge righteously betwixt GOD and your Selves, and beware you be not excluded from the Mercy of GOD by your own Sentence. To be Self-Condemed is an heavy Guilt, and it is no less grievous to be Condemed by our Judge. The neglect of this necessary Change exposeth us to both these Mischiefs, for without Renovation and Amendment, we cannot say, or think, that it is fit for GOD to forgive us, and he who is not forgiven, is in Effect Condemed, because he is sure, that when he is brought to Tryal, it will so happen unto him.

[Here you may make use of the first Prayer]
at the End of the Book.

GOD's help is always supposed to concur with their Faithful Endeavours. He is as ready to give his Holy Spirit to them who truly seek it, as a Father is to give bread to his hungry child.

CHAR.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Possibility of Amendment.

IN Order to your Amendment, it is necessary you should look upon it as feasible and possible; for that which is impossible, justly Discourages all Attempts and Endeavours. But this Work you may attempt with good Success, if you have a good Will to it, because you will have GOD on your side, and it is certain, nothing is impossible with Him. 'Tis his Will and Desire you should Turn and Live. He hath no Pleasure in the Death of him that Dyeth, *Ex. 2. 18. 31.* and that He hath not is plain, because He is pleas'd to use all the Means that can be used (except plain force) to prevent it. He is pleas'd to exhort, and warn, and intreat, and admonish, and threaten; which would not look well, if He did not Intend and Desire that Men should Turn and live. And it would look like Ludicrous and Vain, if they were under an Impossibility of doing that which they are perswaded to do. And therefore let no one say, they cannot help doing Wickedly, for they may help it, if the fault be not in themselves.

I do not say they can do it alone, but GOD's help is always supposed to concur with their Faithful Endeavours. He is as willing to give his Holy Spirit to them who duly ask it, as a Parent is to give Bread to his

hungry Children, Mat. 7. 11. If you implore his help, He will put you into a Capacity of helping your selves.

According to the Ordinary Strength God gives Men, 'tis plain they may forbear their Vices if they please, because we see they do forbear them when they please.

I remember a Vulgar, but Pregnant Instance used to this purpose.

Take the most Profane Swearer, and bring Him into the Company of *Those* for whom he has a Reverence, and he shall forbear Sweating, as tho' he used it not. And if he had the same lively sense of GOD's presence, and the same Reverence for Him, he would certainly forbear ever being Guilty of that Vice. For no Man can discern to the contrary, but that his Power of forbearing is the same at one time that it is at another.

And the Case is the same of Persons addicted to other Vices, they can forbear them when they have a Mind to it, and therefore if they do it not, 'tis not because they cannot, but because they will not.

If it be ill Company that excites their Corruptions, (as it often so happens) surely they may forbear to Associate with such Company if they please. It is in our choice what Company we will keep, or else nothing at all is in our choice.

It must be granted to be difficult for Persons who have been long accustomed to such and such Vices, to forsake them and recover from

from them (and nothing more than great difficulty, can be meant by some Expressions of Scripture, as that particularly, *Jerem. 13. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil* — but difficulty and impossibility are things vastly different. The latter excites and discourages all Endeavours, but difficulty, especially in things of great Moment, rather engages and whets our Diligence.

You say it is difficult to Turn and Reform. What then? Tho' it be difficult, as long as it is necessary, it must be done. The necessary fulfils and answers all Objections and Instructions to the contrary.

There is some Labour required to all worthy Undertakings, and will you sick at a little Labour in this Important Matter? are you willing to deny your selves nothing, to save your Souls, after you have done so much to destroy them? Do you think it is not worth your while, to strive a little against the Scoundrel, to save your selves from Drowning?

If you would do the same in this most needful Case, that you usually do in Cases less Necessary, you would not so much complain of difficulty.

When you are Sick, and are convinced you must Die, if you Use not such and such Means, tho' the Medicines are Nauseous or Offensive, yet upon that Necessity you will patiently submit to them. In that Case you will not vomit, and Sweating, and Bleeding

and Copping, and Lancing, and any Extre-
mity, to save your Life or your Limbs; and
will you do nothing to save your Souls, and I
may add your Bodies too, from Eternal Tor-
ment and Destruction?

But to obtain Eternal Happiness, is yet
more necessary, and will you do nothing in
Order to that great End? Is not the Kingdom
of Heaven worth Labouring for? Is it not
worth your Asking and Seeking? Your
earnest Prayers will go a great way towards
it: GOD will not deny you his Grace,
if you Faithfully Ask it, and that will Avert
you to deny your selves, and subdue your
Corruptions, and when that is done, you will
become good Christians of Course.

Besides, to be Religious is not so hard a
Task, as perhaps you think it is. If it impos-
es some Restraints upon you, they are Mo-
dest and Moderate Ones, which do not hinder
your Reasonable Liberties; and for those
little Denials, it will make you Ten-fold
Able in inward Peace and Satisfaction.

Indeed, it is a Wonder how you can
enjoy any Peace or Quiet in Irreligious
Courtes. For can any Body be at rest,
when they are every Moment in Danger
of being Undone, and know not how soon
the Ruin may befall them? It is strange
to observe the Inconsistency of Men's Behavi-
our, that in one thing they shall be very
Wary and Industrious; and in another

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thing of greater Moment, wholly Supine and Negligent. It is not easie to give an Account of this Unevenness of Temper; but it is much to be feared, that it proceeds from some secret Degrees of Unbelief.

People do not heartily and firmly believe the great Articles of Religion, but only superficially, and as it were upon Common Report. They do not believe the Promises and Threatnings of GOD, with that Earnestness and Application of Mind, with which they believe other Matters of a present Temporal Importance.

† *Hoc autem fit, fratres dilectissimi, quia fides deest, quia nemo credit futura esse quae promittit Deus.* Cyr. Serm. de Mortal.

† They give but a faint Assent to them, suffering them to swim about loosely in their Heads, without sinking down into their Hearts, from whence they should impart their powerful Efficacy. 'Tis certain, a lively fervent Belief of the Articles of your Faith, will help you as much as any thing (next to the Grace of GOD) to overcome all the Difficulties of your Christian Warfare. Take for Instance but the First and Last Articles of your Creed, and Digest them, and they can hardly fail to Operate upon you. For if you Believe in GOD, and if you Believe a Life everlasting, I know not how you can easily avoid endeavouring to please that GOD, and to Attain that Life, which comprehends

Of the Possibility of Amendment. 39

tends in it all Well Being and Happiness.

It should seem easie to you, to do any thing in Order to this End, because of the Necessity that attends it (as before was mentioned.) That should in Reason engage your Endeavours, and if they are earnest and faithful, you need not fear that they will be in vain. The hardest struggle will be at the First, when that is once over; afterwards all Opposition will fall before you.

Lastly, To clear this Objection of Difficulty and Impossibility, you should consider the Examples of all the good People that either are now Alive, or that are gone before to the Regions of Blessedness: for all these are as so many Witnesses, against the Impossibility of Repenting and Amending. They were Sinners, such as you are, and divers of them worse than you can easily be supposed to be; and if they by Repenting and Amending escaped the Danger, and are gotten above it, why may not you do so too? For you have the same Sense to understand your Danger, the same Word of GOD to warn you of it, the same Help of his Grace to Assist you that they had; And why the same Remedies duly Used and Applied, should not Work the same Cures, no Reason can be given.

40 *Of God's great Goodness*

In short, GOD does not hinder you, for He desires your Amendment, and Men cannot hinder you, nor yet the Devil without your Consent, and if there be nothing but your selves to hinder, when in Duty and Interest you ought to promote it, 'tis a Shame to Complain any longer, as if Amendment were a thing Impossible.

C H A P. VIII.

Of GOD's great Goodness and Readiness to Forgive.

They who have Contracted a great Guilt upon their Consciences, by a long Irreligious Course, would likely be willing to give over and Amend, if they could be secured from their Sins already Committed. But if the Punishment of their past Sins must be inflicted on them, they will be apt to think (as *Cæsar* was wont to say) that they can be undone but once; and for ought they know, that may happen to them upon the Account of their former Follies, tho' they should now Amend.

Indeed, in Offences Committed against Humane Laws, there is this Discouragement, that let a Man be never so Penitent or Reformed, if his former Crimes be Discovered and Proved against him, he shall

be Condemned and Executed for them. But, blessed be G O D, it is not so in Offences Committed against the Divine Laws; for if a Man Repent of such Offences, and forsake them, his past Offences shall be Forgiven and Forgotten, and G O D will deal with him, as if he had never been Guilty.

The Ground and Foundation of this Gracious and Favourable Dealing, is G O D's exceeding great Goodness and Readiness to Forgive. Which is a Doctrine most clearly Taught in Scripture for the Comfort of Penitent Persons, and is a singular Invitation and Encouragement to Amendment.

David, who had been Guilty of very great Sins, was almost overwhelmed with the Guilt and Remembrance of them. As we may see, *Psal. 130. 1. Out of the deep have I cryed unto Thee, O Lord.* Which Deep no Doubt was a Gulph of Guilt, and a great Distress of Mind and Conscience Occasioned thereby. And his Relief was the same we here propound; for so we find him Comforting himself, *vers. 4. But there is Forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared; that is, I will return to my Duty of serving and fearing Thee, because I believe Thou art so Gracious, as to Forgive my past Offences.* And *vers. 7.* he repeats the same in Effect; *with the Lord there is Mercy, and with Him is plentiful Redemption, and He shall Redeem Israel from all his Iniquities.*

So that there is no Occasion for *Old Sinners* to Despair or be Discouraged from Repenting and Turning, because upon such a Change, **G O D** is willing to remit the Guilt of their former Sins, and to be reconciled to them.

The first Notion of **G O D** implies Power and Goodness. He is that infinite Being from whom All other Things receive their Beings, together with all the Comforts and Ornaments of them, and his Endowing his Creatures with such Gifts, is a visible Demonstration of his Goodness.

He made Man at first an upright and an happy Creature (if he would have kept himself so) and when he had ruined himself, **G O D** restored him to a new Capacity of Happiness by the Incarnation and Passion of his only Son: and could greater Goodness or Kindness be shewed, than is contained in either of these Instances?

But that Gracious Disposition of **G O D** in Forgiving the Sins and Offences of Men, is that which we especially intend in this Place,

That **G O D** is Rich in Mercy, towards all those who come unto Him and Trust in Him, the Scripture every where declares, to our great and endless Comfort.

To this purpose we have a most remarkable Passage in that Noble Manifestation, which **G O D** was pleased to make of Himself to *Moses*, *Exod. 34. 6.* there He manifests

manifests and Defines Himself in these Words. *The Lord God Merciful and Gracious, long Suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression and Sin.*

Is not this sufficient to Answer all Fears and Doubts, that G O D Proclaimeth and Publisheth thus concerning Himself?

The same, our Blessed Saviour manifests concerning Himself throughout his whole Gospel. Particularly by his Gracious Invitation of Sinners to come unto Him, that He might help and ease them. *Mat. 11. 28. Come unto me all ye that Labour and are heavy Laden and I will refresh you.* Where the Labouring and being Heavy Laden, must be understood of the Burden of Sin and Guilt, from which He promises to Release them.

And indeed, the great End and Design of the Gospel is, to save Sinners by all the Methods of Grace and Favour, and particularly by Forgiving them their Sins. So we are expressly told, *Luke 24. 47. where Christ's Suffering and Rising from the Dead is said to be for this End, that Repentance and Remission of Sins might be Preached to all Nations.*

And for an Actual and Experimental Proof of this Grace, we read in the Gospel, how our Saviour forgave the Sins of divers Persons; and He would not Condemn the Woman taken in Adultery to Death, as the Law enjoyn'd, *but bade her go and Sin no more, Mat. 9. 2. Luke 7. 48. Job. 8. 11.*

In the Second Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, we have Abundance to this purpose, *vers. 1.* he tells them, *they had been Dead in Trespasses and Sins*; And *vers. 4.* he Specifies the Means of their Cure and Recovery. But GOD who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he Loved us, hath quickned us, &c. And *vers. 7.* that He might shew the exceeding Riches of his Grace, in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus.

He was the Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanness, as the Prophet speaks, *Zach. 13. 1.* that is, for Washing and Cleansing Sinners from the Guilt and Defilement of their Sins.

And it is Remarkable, that almost all the Words signifying Goodness and Kindness, are made use of in one Place or other upon this Occasion.

Love, Mercy, Reconciliation, Pity, Compassion, Forgiveness, Riches of Mercy, Bowels of Mercy, and a great many other such like Terms, are used and applyed to this Subject of GOD's Goodness and Forgiveness. As tho' the Sense and Matter contained in it, could not be exhausted or fully express'd in Words.

Eph. 1. 3.

Eph. 2. 4.

Eph. 2. 7.

Eph. 2. 8.

Tit. 3. 4.

2 Th. 1. 11.

What greater Comfort or Encouragement can there be for Sinners, than this Fulness and Variety? Can they Want or Desire any thing that is not Comprehended in some of these?

That which they want especially is to be Forgiven; to have their former Debts and Offences Cancelled, that they may be Absolved from Guilt and Fear; and with what a Fulness of good Will and Affection, is G O D pleased to Meet and Answer their Desires?

Indeed, People may exclude themselves from G O D's Mercy, and render themselves incapable of Forgiveness, by continuing in their Sins, or for want of asking and imploring it in a due manner. But they who seek it in a Penitent, Humble, Devout manner, and in the Name of Him who hath purchased it for them, are in no Danger of being Rejected or Denied.

Almighty G O D who hath made such a plentiful Provision of Grace and Mercy for Sinners by the Death and Merits of his only Son, cannot be conceived to be backward or unwilling to apply it for their Pardon.

He rather *Delights* in shewing Mercy, and pardoning Offences, for that was the main End of the whole Undertaking.

He cannot but be pleased with extending the Benefits of his Son's Redemption to as many as are capable of it; for that is for the greater

greater Honour of his Mercy, and in Order to the further promoting that Great and Excellent End of doing the more Good to Mankind.

Besides, from hence there ariseth a Tribute of Gratitude and Praise, and all Devout Affections to Almighty G O D and our Blessed Saviour.

For he who Believes that his Sins are Forgiven, as every good Christian may and ought to do, cannot but see himself engaged to G O D in all Love, Gratitude and Obedience, for so Inestimable a Kindness. 'Tis said of *Mary Magdalene*, that she loved much, *because much was forgiven her*, Luke 7. 47. and surely we shall lye under the same Obligation, upon the Account of our manifold Offences being Forgiven us. We shall think nothing too much for us to do, nothing too much for us to Deny our selves for his Sake, who has done such great things for us; who of Sinners and Rebels has Adopted us to be his Sons, and Designs to make us Heirs of his Kingdom.

And this suggests another Argument for the fuller Assurance of G O D's Goodness and Readiness to Forgive; and that is His Relation to us as a Father. So our Saviour has given us leave to call Him in that Divine Prayer which He has taught us.

Now

Now what does this Import, but a Paternal Care, Love and Kindness?

A Fathers Kindness is not *easily* lost, and if it happen to be lost, it is more easily recovered, because there is a Natural Inclination and good Will, that Mediates and makes way for it again.

This Argument, as it is of great Force, so it contains in it great Incouragement and *strong Consolation* for Penitent Sinners: to which it will be needless to add any more.

CHAP. IX.

Of Man's Frailty and Mortality.

Howsoever it might have pleased GOD to deal with Man, if he had continued in Innocency, (either to have kept him always in Paradise, or to have Translated him to Heaven, as He after did by *Enoch* and *Elias*) 'tis certain he should not have Dyed, as we now do, if he had not Sinned: For Death was the Punishment threatned, which could not have taken place, if Man's Disobedience had not made way for it. Without *that* Disobedience it could not have happened. For to threaten him with that, in Case he Sinned, which would have befallen him, tho' he had not Sinned, would have been to Trifle and Jest with him; which

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which it was far from Infinite Wisdom to do.

How GOD would have preserved Man's Immortality, if he had not Sinned we cannot so distinctly know. 'Tis probable, the Fruits of the Earth were so wholesome and pure, and the Tree of Life endued with such Sovereign Vertues, as were sufficient to have preserved his Body from Decays and Dissolution, but Sin changed the Happy Scene and turned all into Tragedy. It turned Man out of Paradise, where his Preservatives lay, and sunk him down from an Immortal to a Mortal Condition. The Earth was Curst, and the Fruits of it Degenerated, and Diseases had their Commission to enter and seize upon him. So that now his Abode in this Life is Short and Distressed, and his Departure out of it, Painful and Constrained. He is Condemned to undergo the Common Fate of Mortality, and the Various Sorrows and Sufferings that are Antecedent to it. It is not often, that he is free long together from Bodily Pains and Diseases, which ever and anon make him unkind Visits, and dispose him by Degrees for his Dissolution.

Old Age especially, is the proper Scene and Season for most Distempers to shew themselves in.

Then Stiffness and Chronical Pains begin their Reign, Gouts, Sciatica's, Cramps become customary, and take up their Ordinary Residence in our Bones and Joynts.

These

These weaken and loosen the Frame of this Earthly Tabernacle ; they often shake it and make it to totter, and at last Death like a Tempest or Whirlwind overturns the whole, and lays it in the Dust.

Hitherto we have heard a Lamentable Story ; but is there nothing to Soften or Abate the fatal Accident ? Yes, blessed be G O D there is ; for He in his Wisdom and Mercy, hath turned Death into a Blessing, and made it a singular Benefit and Advantage to all good People. The Death of his Son has sweetned and sanctified it to them, and made it the Entrance into a new and a better Life.

Indeed, G O D is not pleas'd Ordinarily to remit that Debt of Death we owe to Nature to any, and it is well for them that He does not. 'Tis happy for us, as the Case now stands, that our abode here is but short ; for if we were to abide here always, we could never be perfectly Happy ; nay, we could never make our Escape from Sin and Misery. Our Corruptions would ever Haunt and Trouble us ; and moreover, we should be ever Subject to Pains, Sicknels, Vexations, and all the Burdensome Circumstances of our Fallen Estate. What an intolerable Burden would Old Age be, if Death did not in some reasonable time Relieve and Release us ?

If there were no such thing as another Life, yet Death would be desiræable to some People, because it frees them from so great Evils, as the good of their Lives and Beings can

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can in no wise Answer or make them a Recompence for.

So that Death is really a Refuge from the Miseries and Distresses of Life. 'Tis our Harbour of Safety, 'tis our Haven of Rest.

But perhaps you will say, If Death be thus Advantageous, it was well it came into the World. It should seem that the Consequences of Man's Fall were harmless, nay, and Beneficial too, seeing so much Good befalls him by the Means and Ministry of Death.

In Answer to this we must know, That Death in its full Extent, as it was Threatned by G O D, comprehended all manner of Misery both of Body and Soul. Not only the Separation of the Soul and Body, which is commonly understood by Death; but all the Evils and Sufferings which befall the Sons of Men from their Births to their Graves, which Evils are so many, and make Life in many Cases so Uneasie and Unhappy, that this last Act or Part of Death, which consists in the Separation, seems to do Men a singular kindness in Releasing them from those Evils. Had it not been for Sin, those Evils had never been, and then Death would have been no way Useful or Desireable; but upon Supposition of the Manifold Evils of this Life, Death is a Kindness and a Release.

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It is not Good in it self; for a Life of perpetual Happiness (as Man's Life was at first intended to be) is vastly better; 'tis good only comparatively, as it is a Remedy and a Release from greater Evils. 'Tis like a Plank after Shipwrack, which may be helpful in that Case of Necessity, but 'tis better not to be Shipwrackt, and so have no need of such an hazardous and miserable escape.

Besides, having lost our Immortality in this World, Death puts us upon the Quest of Immortality in the other World; and Releases the Soul from being any longer a partaker in the Miseries of the Body.

In these Respects Death does good People a considerable Favour; and moreover (which is the greatest kindness of all) it introduces them into that Blessedness, which the Son of GOD has Purchased and Prepared for Religious Purified Souls. It removes them out of their Pilgrimage into a Paradise. It takes them out of their Prison, and brings them into a Palace, and puts them into the Possession of the promised Kingdom.

As for the Disobedient and Unbelieving, Death still is, and ought to be very Dreadful and Formidable to them, for upon such it has its full Force and Malignity. If it Discharges them from the Distresses of this World, it involves them in the more Dreadful Miseries of the other; and only exchanges Temporal Sufferings for Eternal Perdition.

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Here some may be apt to make another Objection, and to complain of Harsh and Unequal dealing; that the short and Transitory Miscarriages of a Sinner, should be Punished with Endless and Eternal Misery.

But if the Matter be thoroughly and impartially considered, we shall find that there is nothing unjust or unequal in it.

Some Alledge in Answer herunto; That our short imperfect Obedience, has an Eternal Reward Annexed and Promised to it, and therefore it should not seem strange, if our Disobedience be Recompensed in the like manner.

But whether the parts of this Parallel, do so exactly agree, as that the one sort of Dealing should Infer and Justify the other, seems Dubious; because the conferring of undeserved Favours, is agreeable to the Bounty and Goodness of GOD, and has nothing in it, that any one has cause to complain of; but the Inflicting of Unequal and Disproportionable Punishments, seems to Derogate from his Justice and Goodness, and to have somewhat in it, that is Injurious to the Creature.

This Difficulty therefore seems to be better solv'd, by referring it to the Frame and Constitution of Man's Nature, which being of it self perpetual, his Happiness or Misery must be so too.

Every

Every Man must be either Happy or Unhappy after Death; and whether the One or the other be his Lot, it must be Unchangeable, because of the Unchangeable Duration of his Being.

So that the Perpetuity is not to be Ascribed to the Transgressions, but to the Making and Constitution of the Transgressor.

Every such Person must be one thing or another for ever, and therefore if he be justly Adjudg'd to be Miserable, he must be so for ever, because he must be always what he is.

If Wicked Impenitent Persons, who Dye in their Sins, carry Devilish Tempers and Dispositions with them into the other World, 'tis impossible they can be Happy there: For being Enemies to GOD, and Strangers to a Divine Life, and being never like to be better: (For, whilst is Non Working or Repenting in the Grave) it cannot be Conceived, how their Condition should be Altered for the better; and if it be not Altered, it must be the same, as long as their Beings continue, that is for ever.

This Doctrine is no School Notion, but a Certain and Divine Truth, which the Gospel Teaches. For there we read, in our Saviour's own Words, of *Everlasting Punishment* and of *Life Eternal*. Mat. 25. 46. Which insinuates, or at least supposes, that Man's Being is *Eternal* and *Eternal* for eitherwise *Life Eternal*, would signifie nothing to the

Righteous, neither would Everlasting Punishment be any Terror to the Wicked, if they were not Everlasting and Eternal themselves, to Enjoy the One, and Endure the Other.

If Souls are not Immortal after Death, then there is an End of All Religion, and the Sanctions of it. Then we might say, as St. Paul does (in the Language of those Wicked Jews, mentioned Isa. 22. 13.) *let us Eat and Drink, for to Morrow we Dye.* As much as to say, let us Indulge our Lusts, for after Death there will be a full End of us.

Such are the Vile Consequences of their Doctrine, who take upon them to Dispute against the Natural Immortality of the Soul, or would make it depend upon I know not how many Uncertainties.

Such are the Terms of Eternal and Everlasting, are the Terms used by our Saviour in the Place before Cited. And they who Deny or Question such a Duration of the Soul, and of the whole Man after the Resurrection, do what in them lyes, to overthrow the Christian Doctrine, and to render all its Injunctions Vain and Ridiculous.

An Eternal State, is the main thing in Religion, which good People hope for, and which the Wicked justly Dread: and therefore it is to be Hoped, that Wise and Good Christians will not suffer their Faith to be shaken in a Point so

necessary to their Comfort, and so clearly and plainly contained in the Gospel of our Saviour.

But to return to our Subject. Man's Frailty and Mortality, will not, I suppose, be Denied or Questioned by the Scepticks and Disputers of this World. Or if it be, we have an innumerable Company of Witnesses to prove it. We have all the past Generations for our Evidence, and the present Generation cannot but give their Concurrent Testimony, Every Day and Hour affords us fresh Examples of Mortality, and they who are not yet gone, are preparing to follow. GOD grant, that we may prepare in the right Manner, that so we may find Life in Death, and a Joyful Immortality after a Wearisome Pilgrimage.

[Here you may make Use of the
Third Prayer at the End of the
Book]

CHAR

Of the great Account we must make after
Death.

ALMIGHTY GOD is the Sovereign Lord of all the World, and consequently all Creatures are under his Government.

Man is so particularly, as being more capable of knowing his Relation to GOD, and his Dependence on Him, than the other Creatures are.

This Government GOD exerciseth in the World, by Enacting Laws, and Commanding his Subjects to be Obedient to them.

The great Supreme Law of Heaven, is Holiness, Righteousness and Goodness, and these He has brancht out into sundry Laws and Commandments, revealed at sundry times to the Sons of Men.

He gave the first Man a Law or Precept, which he most Undutifully broke, and was immediately called to Account and Punished severely for it.

The first Ages after, had Doubtless Rules and Directions whereby to Govern themselves. And the Jews had particular Laws, first Published by GOD himself, and afterwards written, that they might not be lost or mistaken.

In the latter Ages of the World, the Messiah appeared, and he Published the Royal Law of his Gospel; wherein He has fully declared the Will of GOD, and directed Mankind how they may please Him and be accepted of Him. Herein are contained the most Excellent Divine Precepts, which are fastned upon Men, by the most Weighty and Important Promises and Threatnings.

And to make these Methods of GOD's Government effectual to Regulate the Lives and Behaviour of Men, He declares, that He takes Notice how his Laws are Obeyed. And that every Person shall be brought to give an Account of their Lives and Actions before Him.

And for present warning, He gives some Examples in both kinds, Punishing some, and Blessing others in a remarkable manner, in this World; but the great Assizes are not to be kept here: they are reserved for the other World, which is the World of Recompences.

That Great and Final Audit is after Death, as we are told, *Heb. 9. 27.* it is Appointed for all Men once to Dye, and after that the Judgment.

That then, there shall be a Final Difference made between Good and Bad; and that the One shall be Rewarded, and the Other Punished, has been the constant Belief and Expectation of all People and Nations, and it

seems to be an Original Dictate of Reason and Conscience. And the Gospel hath so expressly Confirmed this Notion, that there is nothing more Certain or Assured in all our Religion. We are told, *Act. 17. 31. that God has appointed a Day, in which He will judge the World in Righteousness.*

How long it shall be till that Time, is a Secret not given to us to know; neither is it Material if we could know it; because Rewards and Punishments (which are the main Concerns) begin to be Administred immediately after Death, tho' they are not so Complete and Full as they will be, after Resurrection and Judgment.

If you ask me how this can be justly done, before Tryal and Condemnation? I answer, It may be justly done, by an Omniscient Judge; who knows the Truth of every Man's Case, as well before as after Tryal. His Infinite Knowledge is such, that He cannot be Mistaken, and his Justice and Righteousness is such, that He can do no Man any Wrong.

Besides, every Man's Conscience is G O D's present Witness, which cannot but Justify his Dealing, so that the Person himself will have nothing to Oppose against the Equity of the Award.

Afterwards, in G O D's due Time, the General Judgment will be Solemnized, and every One shall be Summoned to Appear and Answer for themselves.

To this purpose we have an Allusion of Books being Written and kept, wherein every Ones Deeds are Written and Recorded, So the Judgment is Described, Rev. 20. 12. the Books were Opened, and the Dead were Judged out of those things that were written in the Books.

The Modern Jews, are likewise said to have a Tradition to the same Effect; that every Person has an Angel sitting on each Shoulder, the One to Write down the good; and the other the Evil Deeds which he Committeth.

G O D's Omniscience is a more perfect Record than any Books can be. He cannot but know, for He is every where present and sees all things, and He cannot forget, for that would be a Defect, which is inconsistent with his infinite Perfections.

You who have lived many Years, and perhaps are now in the Declination of your Age, can hardly forget any bad Action, you have been Guilty of, in your whole Time. Your Consciences will keep an Account of such Deeds, without your Care. And can you think that G O D's Remembrance is more Frail and Imperfect than Yours?

You will perhaps Reply and Say, If G O D shall enter into Judgment with Sinners, it is impossible that any of them can be Justified in his Sight.

Indeed in Strictness we cannot stand before Him, but with the Gracious and Favourable Allowances He is pleased to make, we may, for He Allows us to Plead his Sons Redemption, to all the purposes for which it was intended. He Allows that we shall be Tryed by the favourable Laws of the Gospel. He Allows us the Benefit of Repentance and Revocation, and especially of Amendment. He admits of these for his Son's sake, instead of perfect Righteousness and Obedience. He will not impute unto us mere Humane Frailties and Infirmities, provided we Allow not our selves in any Wicked Habitual Courses. If we do not Love or Allow of our Sins, but Hate them, and are Troubled for them, He is willing to pardon Surprizes and single Offences.

These are Gracious and Favourable Terms to be Tryed upon, and with these Allowances, if we have taken any Tolerable Care of our selves, we may be able to stand in the Judgment.

So that the sincere and honest Hearted are not like to be Condemned; nor any other, but those who Allow themselves in Courses inconsistent with the Love of GOD, and the Love and Life of Religion within them. From such vile Courses we must be sure to refrain, if we would make our selves capable of the pardoning Mercy of GOD, and of a Sentence of Absolution in the Judgment.

But as for those who care not for G O D or Religion, That have not his Fear and Love planted in their Hearts, That never were renewed in the Spirit of their Minds, nor heartily Believe and Embrace the Gospel of our Saviour. That prefer their Unlawful Pleasures or Profits, before the Love of G O D and His Service, and make no Scruple of the Usual and Accustomed Practice of Vice and Immorality. Their Account must be Dreadful, and their Judgment without Mercy. Such are those mentioned Revel. 22. 8. *The Fearful, and Unbelieving, and Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all Lyars, shall have their Portion in the Lake that Burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the Second Death.* And the same may be said of any Allowed Course of Sin, or the frequent Impatient Repetitions of it. There is little ground to Hope for Mercy from G O D towards such Persons.

For can we think that Almighty G O D should justify the Ungodly, who continue to be the Enemies of Holiness and Goodness?

Can we imagine, that he should Suffer his Laws and his Supreme Authority to be always Trampled upon? No, such Dealing would be wholly inconsistent with the Honour of his Just and Righteous Government. We are told what such are to expect in that Parable, representing the Judgment, *Luke 19. 27, Those mine Enemies that would*

would not that I should reign over them, bring thither and slay them before me. **GOD** does not think it fit to deal gently with Stubborn and Irreclaimable Rebels, neither will he so deal with any such. If they will not Repent they must Perish. If they will not Submit and Amend, they must be Condemned and Destroyed.

And are not these Weighty Matters, which every Wise Man ought sadly to consider and lay to Heart? Are they not vastly greater than any Concerns we have in the World, though our Lives and Fortunes lay at Stake? For what is this Transitory Life, the greatest part of which is already Vanished and gone? And what is the Wealth and Pleasures of the World, or our own Vain Wills and Humours, that we should Hazard our Eternal Well-Being, and incur Everlasting Woe and Misery, for such poor perishing Trifles?

Examine your Selves Seriously, and Search into your Lives and Consciences, that you may know what your Condition is.

If you find you are Guilty, Judge and Condemn your selves, that you may not be Judged of the Lord. Repent, and Sue out your Pardon and forsake those Courses which will expose you to the Danger of the Judgment.

For why should any Man in his Sense, Delight to do that, which he certainly knows will Ruin and Undo him in the End? Why should he Allow himself to Commit such Crimes for which he is sure to be Tryed, and for which in all likelihood he will be Condemned to Eternal Misery?

Did you never see a Prisoner at the Bar, Trembling for Fear, and overwhelmed with Confusion and Despair, in Expectation of the Dismal Sentence. Make the Case your own, as it will most certainly be at one time or other, if you prevent it not; and let that Thought direct you for the Future.

Indeed Humane Laws are Inexorable, after a Crime is Committed; for then it is too late for the Malefactor to Amend; but GOD's Government is more Gracious, and you may yet be Forgiven upon your Amendment, though you have often Offended. Make a good Use of that Grace, for why should any one rush into Destruction, when they may prevent it by an Ordinary Care and Caution?

With what Circumstances that great Affair of the Judgment will be Managed and Transacted, is not so Evident. The Scripture intimates, That the Place will be in the Air, and that our Blessed Saviour will be the Supreme Judge; under whom, 'tis said, the Saints shall Judge the World, 1 Cor. 6. 2. And particularly, that the Apostles

posses shall Judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel. But in what Manner and Form it shall be done, whether all at once, or severally, after one another, what Time the Process will take up, and what Evidence will be Produced. These, and a great many other Circumstances (which are but Curiosities) we may now, without any Prejudice be ignorant of, neither does it become us to intrude into such Secrets.

Only let us have a Care of the main Matter, that our Cause be good; or that we have Obtained the Favour of our great Advocate and Mediator to make it so. We cannot Depend on our own Merits, who are at best but Unprofitable Servants, but our Faithful Endeavours will be required, and a Conscientious Care to Discharge every part of our Duty.

Particularly, Works of Mercy and Charity are said to Recommend us to our Judge, and to Obtain a favourable Sentence from Him, *Matt. 25.*

'Tis mightily our Interest to do whatsoever we know will please Him, or render Him propitious to us. In order herunto, let the Thoughts of Death and Judgment be often in our Minds. Those Thoughts will likely produce Seriousness and Care and Exactness of Behaviour.

For 'tis certain, there can be no Care, Diligence, or Circumspection too great, to Answer such vast and Important Expectations.

~~If you compare with your selves, I believe a very few Figures will suffice to set down the whole Summ, and if you Doubt for~~

~~the Faults, Errors, Follies and Vexations, where with this Golden Age is Dashed and blended, there will be little or nothing left Remaining, which no Body thinks Desirable~~

CHAP. XI.

Of the Vanity of the World.

ON this Subject the Wiseſt Man has written at Large, and we cannot Imagine, that much can be ſaid after Him.

He kept an exact Account, and when he had Summ'd up All, we find the Total at the Bottom, is nothing but Vanity. This was the whole Summ and Reſult of his Experience, and what can we expect to find after ſuch an Enquirer? We may find the ſame, if we go over the Account of Man's Life, from the Beginning to the End.

For what is Childhood with its Rattles and Toys, but Vanity in the moſt Obvious Senſe? And how little better is Youth with its Wild Pranks and Projects, which are commonly vain at the beſt, and it is well if they deſerve not a worſe Denomination.
 Then

Then follows Manhood; which is the Age of Action and Observation. But how little Solid Comfort and Satisfaction do the Adventures of this Age commonly bring? If you compute with your selves, I believe a very few Figures will suffice to set down the whole Summ: and if you Deduct for the Evils, Errors, Follies and Vexations, wherewith that little Contentment is Dasht and Blended, there will be little or nothing left Remaining. After a while Old Age comes on, which no Body thinks Desirable, unless it be merely for the sake of Living. It is naturally Attended with so many Troubles and Infirmities, with Pains, Aches, Feebleness, a general Failure of all the Offices and Enjoyments of Life, as make it very Unpleasant and Tedious to those who Labour under it. If Men happen to Live a little longer than Ordinary in this uneasy Posture, they return where they began, and grow Children again. They become Pityable and Helpless, and are a Burden to themselves and to the World.

In all this how Mean and Inconsiderable is the Condition of Men? they Rowl about from one Place to another, from one Business to another, but still their Troubles follow them, and they are, when at best, far enough from any settled Condition of Rest and Happiness. Or if they seem to enjoy some Shadow of Happiness, upon the Account of an Easy and Prosperous Estate, it signifies little,

little, because it soon departs as a Shadow does: And we may take this for a Certain Rule, that the Happiness which a Man can see to the End of, is no Happiness to be depended on; because when it is come to an End, the Man is Unhappy again, and as much to seek as ever he was.

How Jeune and Insignificant are the common Passages and Entertainments of Life? One Generation passeth and another cometh; the Sun rises and sets, the Winds blow and change, and return to their points. Eccles. i. 4. 5.

And so for our selves; We divide our Time between Sleeping and Waking, Eating and Hungring, Labour and Rest. We rest from our Labour at Night, and in the Morning we return to them again: And so by an Empty Vicissitude, we are carryed on to Old Age and Death: Like Horses in a Mill Drudging about in a Round, till we are able to go no longer.

The greatest Comfort we meet with, is for the most Part in our Friends and Loving Relations; but who is there of any considerable Age, who has not lost some of the Best and Dearest of these; who when they have left us, have carryed the best of our Earthly Joy along with them?

But then, the Injuries and Oppression, the Poverty and Sickness, the Publick and Private Calamities, the Growth of Mischief and Misfortunes, with which the World is bound,

bounds, and from which no Condition of Life is Free: These deserve a Name worse than that of Vanity, and by a costly Experiment convince us, in what a Place and State we Sojourn.

And here give me leave to examine you, who have spent some Time in the World, whether you have not found it thus in your Experience? Have you not been Vext and Cross'd, and Disappointed, and Injured? And upon the whole Reckoning, have not your Accounts more Items of Trouble and Vexation than of Joy and Satisfaction?

If you were to take a *New Lease* (as they use to call it) and to Live an equal Space of Time over again, with an equal Number of Incumbrances, do you think it would be worth any great Income?

The whole History of Time, is mostly made up of Cross and Calamitous Accidents, Wars and Commotions, Battles and Sieges, Invasions and Conquests, Dearth and Earthquakes, great Floods and hard Frosts, high Winds and deep Snows, great Plagues and other infectious Epidemical Distempers. These and such like are the Materials out of which Histories and Annals are Composed. And indeed to expect any other is a vain and weak Expectation. But Sin hath made the Creature *Subject to Vanity*, and hath made the World a Distressed and Calamitous place, and so it is like to be, till GOD is pleas'd to bring about a new Revolution.

volution, which we may wish for, but are not like to see in our Days.

And as former Histories are Crowded with unhappy Calamitous Accidents, so the Modern ones may be abundantly furnished with the like Materials.

For is it not the present Case of most Nations, that they are Eaten up with Wars, Robb'd and Plunder'd with Armies, and Impoverish'd with heavy Taxes and Impositions?

And the Private has it's Complaints as well as the Publick. Witness the Feuds and Unkindnesses of Husbands and Wives, the Falseness and Unfaithfulness of Servants, the Undutifulness and Untowardness of Children: the several Kinds of Losses, by Robberies, by Fires, by insolvent Debtors; in some of which, and perhaps in divers of them, most People have their Shares. These and many other Misfortunes, help to fill up the Accounts of Vanity and Vexation. They make up a Lamentable Story, which it is little Joy to hear, and less to be therein contented.

Again, that which is past and gone, can be nothing worth, tho' perhaps it was once of good Value and Esteem. If it be Transitory, 'tis good for little, which yet is the Condition of all this World's Goods, and of Life itself.

WILLIAM B. **T**he

The past Generations are now never the better, for all their past Labours, or for all their past Enjoyments. And what have they then have they Laboured for, but for the Wind.

How many Millions of Persons has the deep silent Channel of Time, carryed down into utter Oblivion, so that their Names and Memories, as well as their Flesh and Bones, are long ago Perished? These were great and Gay, Prosperous and Flourishing in their Times. They made as good a Figure and as fine a Shew, as any that the World now most admires. But they are gone, and have left nothing behind them, unless it be a farther Proof of David's old Observation, *That Man in his best Estate is altogether Vanity.*

What is become of all the Glory of former Ages, nay, of the very Kingdoms and Monarchies that were once so Potent and Formidable? What is become of Solomon's costly Buildings and curious Gardens, and all the Delights and Curiosities which he heaped together for Himself? His very Kingdom has for divers Ages been lost and extinguished. *Jerusalem* is no longer a City, nor the *Jews* a Nation.

Indeed, he saw the Emptiness of his Enjoyments before Hand, and has left us most Excellent Cautions about ours. His Wisdom is all that remains of Him, and that was a *Prerogative* which belonged not to his Earthly

Earthly Crown, but to another Kingdom which is not of this World. But here you will be apt to Object and Ask, Are we then such poor Despicable Creatures, and is the World such a Wilderness as you represent it? Truly, I think it is just so, and no otherwise. I mean in Respect of this present Life, and in respect of the common sorrowful Accidents and Events that are Incident to this Mortal State. All which I mention, not so much to make you Despise this World, or be uneasy under your present Condition, as to make you look out after a better World and State. The present Life is certainly very Inconsiderable, in all other Respects, except this One, that it gives you Occasion and Opportunity, of making Provision for a Life that is of Infinite Value, and Endless Duration. GOD forbid there should be no better Provision than this World affords for Immortal Creatures. Tho' what you have heard is the true Abstract of the Ordinary Treatment of the World, which must be confess'd for the most part, to be but Course and Mean; Yet Religion discovers better Things to those who have Travell'd in it. It discovers to them a better Invisible World beyond the Grave, where GOD has provided a State of Happiness worthy of his Servants and Children. That is, the Promised Land on the other side Jordan, into which you shall enter, if you belong to the Israel of GOD.

Such a World and State, is as certain as any thing that is most Demonstrable. For do we think that the Wise and Good G O D has made all Men for Nought? Only to Breathe and Walk about a little while, and then finally Perish, and Sink into nothing?

Wisdom and Virtue, are things of a Divine Immortal Nature, they make us like G O D: they fit us for the Contemplation and Enjoyment of Him. And they who are endued with these Divine Qualities, can never cease to be, but must be finally Happy. As long as there is a G O D to be Loved, Adored and Praised by his Creatures, so long shall their Work and Business continue, and so long shall they abide and continue, that is, to Everlasting Duration.

Here his Servants, who Obey and Praise Him, as they are Able, are far removed from the Throne of His Glory, and therefore they must be Contented with such low Degrees of Happiness as are Allotted to their imperfect State. The higher Degrees are reserved for that more perfect State, and for his immediate Presence, which will complete the Glory and Happiness of those who behold it.

Let that Eternal World be the Object of your Thoughts, and let the Hopes of it be the Foundation of your Comfort.

That

That World is stored with good things sufficient to Answer all your Wants, and Satisfy all your Desires. And thither G O D intends to bring you, after He hath Purified you, and prepared you for it. Were it not for these Hopes, this World would be no better than a Bridewell or House of Correction to most People. They Drudge and Slave, and endure abundance of Hardships, and they are to expect no other, for that is the common Entertainment the World affords its Guests.

Especially if they are Strangers to Religion, their Case is still more Deplorable, for in that Case they loose the main Comfort of their Lives, and that which should support them under the Difficulties and Pressures of them.

The Servants of G O D look for a better Countrey, where they shall receive the Reward of their Services, and enter into the Joy of their Lord. After they have pass'd thro' the Straights of this Mortal Life, they shall enter upon a Life Immortal and Glorious.

These are Thoughts and Hopes worthy of Rational Creatures, and without these, there is nothing in this World that deserves your Value or Esteem.

That World is filled with good things
 visited has, **CHAP. XII.**
 Of the great Danger Aged People are in,
 without speedy Amendment.

AS Danger naturally Affrights, so it is
 apt to quicken, and make People bestir
 themselves, to use what means they can to
 avoid it. You who are Aged, if you are not yet
 Converted and Amended, have the greatest
 Reason to be afraid, because of the Danger
 you are in. You are every Day in Danger of
 Death, which cannot be far from you, ac-
 cording to the common Computation of
 Man's Life; and if Death should surprize
 you in an Impenitent State, you are undone
 for ever. For as there is no Recovery from
 Death, so there is no Repenting or Amending
 in the Grave. Death locks every Man up
 in an Unchangeable State. For when the
 Night cometh, no Man can Work, as our Sa-
 viour tells us, *Joh. 9. 4.* that is, when Death
 comes, we can do nothing towards Working
 out our Salvation. The Day of Grace may
 last as long as the Day of Life, but no longer.
 Death is, in this Respect, like *Cesar's* pas-
 sing over the River *Rubicon*, after which,
 no Peace or Reconciliation was to be ex-
 pected.

You have deferred too long already. **G O D** grant it be not too late for you now to begin. For though whilst Life lasts there may be hope, yet there is no small hazard withall.

For besides, that it will be more difficult to begin after such long Delays; what Reason have you to think, that **G O D** will accept of such a backward unwilling Repentance? Why should you Think that He will accept of the very Dreggs of your Time, or that He will receive you into his Vineyard, when Age has made you unfit for any Work?

To this purpose, it may be observed, in that Parable of the Labourers, *Mat. 20.* That tho' some are said to be hired and sent into the Vineyard at the Third Hour, and some at the Sixth, and some at the Ninth, and some at the Eleventh. Yet none are said to be hired at the Twelfth Hour, which was the last of all.

And so in the Parable of the Virgins, *Mat. 25.* it was too late for them to get Oil for their Lamps, when the Bridegroom was Approaching. The Event whereof was, that they were rejected and shut out from the Wedding.

G O D would not suffer those *Israelites* who had Provoked Him so many Years in the Wilderness, to enter into His Rest. He is a free Agent as well as you, and if He hath called many Years, and you have refused to

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Answer, how do you know but He may stop his Ear when you cry at the last? Indeed, it becomes us not to limit the Mercy of GOD, which is exceeding great, but it highly concerns you to lay hold on it speedily, lest you come too late.

You ought to consider, that it is a great Change you are to undergo, which requires some Time to perfect it. Conversion and Amendment of Life, are Works too great to be done in an Hour or a few Days. To alter the whole Frame of a Man's Life and Behaviour; to break off inveterate Customs and Habits; to subdue and bridle Corrupt Appetites and Inclinations; to Love what you Hated, and to Hate what you formerly Loved: to Work such an outward and inward Change, is a Matter that would have deserved a longer space, than probably you have now left remaining.

You ought farther to consider, That if you turn not now, it will be a great Aggravation of your Impenitency.

They who are cut off, in their Sins betimes, have some Plea for the Mitigation of their Punishment; because they had but little Time and short Warning Allowed them. If they had been spared to your Age, to have had their Judgments ripened by Time and Experience, and to have had all the Calls and Warnings that you have had, they might have Repented, as our Saviour saith of Sodom and Tyre and Sidon, *Mat. 11. 21.* But your continuance

continuance in an Impenitent State so long, is a direct Contempt, and a most obstinate wilful Refusal. You do not turn because you seem Resolved against it, and because you are Resolved not to Regard what Reason or Advice, or Consideration, or Conscience, can Alledge or Suggest to the contrary.

You will ask perhaps what you shall do in this Case? I Answer, You must make haste out of your Sinful State, as you would make haste out of the Fire, if you were in it. You must make the same haste out of it, as Lot and his Family were Commanded to make, that they might escape the Burning and Fire of Sodom. For so were the words of the Angel to him; *escape for thy Life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, lest thou be consumed, Gen. 19. 17.* So must you do, you must make haste to escape, that the Vengeance of GOD may overtake you not. You must break off your Sins immediately, your Sensuality, your Carnal Security, your Spiritual Sloth, your Carelessness and Indifferency about the Business of your Soul; and you must apply your selves to the Practice of Religion with all your Might and Power.

Particularly, you ought to dwell upon your Knees in Prayer to GOD, and beg of Him, that he will soften your hard Heart, and Open and Enlighten the Eyes of your Mind, and that he will Work in

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In you such Repentance, as He will accept
 Beg of Him Humbly and Importunately,
 as the Publican did, saying, **G O D be mer-
 ciful to me a Sinner.** Bemoan your self, as
 'tis said of Ephraim, and say unto **G O D**
 in the Words of the Prophet, **Jer. 31. 18.**
Turn thou me, O good Lord, and so shall I be
turned. Borrow all his Lamentations, and let
 them Minister to Sorrow and Contrition for
 your Sins. Repeat often the **51st Psalm** upon
 your Knees; make use of the *Form of Prayer*
and Humiliation before set down, Chap. 5. Shew
 Mercy on the Poor as you are Able, which is
 a Duty very fit to Accompany your Repen-
 tance, and may help towards making your A-
 tonement. Above all, beg earnestly of your
 Merciful Saviour, who shed his Blood for you,
 that he will not suffer you to Perish; that he
 will be Merciful to you, as he was to the
 Thief who suffered with Him on the Cross,
 and was saved by Him at his last Hour.

When **G O D**, who is rich in Mercy, sees
 you thus labouring and striving under great
 Distress of Mind, to turn unto Him, He will
 be apt Graciously to meet you, as the Father
 did his Prodigal Son, and to Accept and Per-
 fect your Repentance, and Embrace you with
 the Arms of his Mercy.

[Here you may make Use of the Second Prayer
 at the End of the Book.]

One of the most probable Guesses is, that we need have been **CHAPTER XIII.** Of the Shortness and Uncertainty of Man's Life.

Short and Long are Relative and Comparative Terms; and when they are Affirmed of any Subject, they imply in Respect to the Duration of somewhat else.

Man's Life may be said to be Long, in Respect of some things. 'Tis long for Instance, in Comparison of the Duration of a Silk-worm, which out-lives not one Year; or of Grasshoppers, which appear not to live above two or three Months. But in respect of things of any Steady and Stanch Duration; Man's Life may be truly said to be short and inconsiderable.

In Compare it with the Days of Eternity; and in that respect 'tis less than a Moment; and in Comparison of the Years of the Patriarchs before the Flood, 'tis of a poor Scantling, hardly so much as an Inch is to a Span. Then Six Hundred or Nine Hundred Years was a Common Age, to which the Age of latter Generations being compared, is almost as nothing.

But G O D was pleased, a while after the Flood, to Contract that large Allowance of Time, for Great and Wise Reasons no doubt, which though we cannot fully Comprehend, yet

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yet we may probably guess this to be One, because their long Lives seem to have been a Means of Corrupting their Manners. Their Lives were so long, that they Thought not of their latter End, and that Tempted them to be Licentious and Ungodly. So we find in Holy Writ, that those long Liv'd Generations Corrupted themselves to that Degree, that G O D saw it necessary to destroy the Generality of Mankind with a Flood. The Thoughts and Imaginations of their Hearts were only Evil, and that continually, so that G O D repented that he had made Man, Gen. 6. 5.

They could not but have a fresh Tradition of the Being, Power and Justice of G O D among them, For a great part of them must know Adam or his Sons, considering the vast Age they Lived to: At least, they must be Acquainted with some who knew and Convers'd with them. And it can hardly be Doubted, but that those early Progenitors and Parents of Mankind, would leave to their Posterity Precepts and Cautions, not to Displease or Disobey G O D, who had Punished them so severely for the first Transgression.

But the length of their Lives in all probability, made them Forget or Disregard those good Rules, and Addict themselves to Wicked and Licentious Courses.

Now, if the Prospect of long Life hath such a Tendency, 'tis well for us that our Lives are Contracted to a narrower Compass. In this Respect, we have or may have some Advantage of those Primitive Patriarchs, that the shortness of our Lives, and the nearness of our Death is a continual Monition, that we Transgress not the Commandments of Almighty G O D, to whom we must shortly give an Account, and from whom we shall receive the Fruit of our Doings.

The Goodness of G O D makes it reasonable to believe, that Man's Life was Contracted after the Flood for this Cause, that the Succeeding Generations might not have the same Temptation to be Wicked, which probably had Corrupted the Former.

The Footsteps of the Abbreviation of Man's Life, are Plain and Evident from the Scriptural History of those Times which followed after the Flood.

The first Abbreviation we find, was a Notable One, which cut off almost one half of the Former Duration. For *Arphaxad* who was Born First after the Flood, Lived but Four Hundred Thirty Eight Years, *Gen. ix. 12, 13*. And in Three Descents after Him, Man's Life was shorted again, by about another half; for *Pelag* was the Third from *Arphaxad*, who Lived but Two Hundred Thirty Nine Years, *Gen. xi. 18, 19*. And in Five

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Five Descents more from *Peleg*; *Mah's* Life was again shortened by almost half of the former Space; for *Abraham*, who was the Fifth of that Line from *Peleg*, Lived but One Hundred Seventy Five Years, *Gen.* 25. 7. And lastly, in the Days of *Moses* (which was but the Third Generation from *Abraham*) *Mah's* Life was cut short by almost another half. For in that Ninetieth *Psalme*, which the Title shews was written by *Moses*, Man's Age is Limited to Seventy or Eighty Years, which is but a slender Allowance, in Comparison of the first Ages and Generations.

Of this Shortness, I suppose every one must be partly sensible in their own Case. For does it not seem a short while, since you began to understand and remember things? The Time is past like a Dream, or like a Tale that is told. It is but as Yesterday when once it is gone, is indeed all Time, is of such a Swift Phantastical Nature, that there is hardly any hold to be taken of it.

By all which we may be the better, if it be not our own Fault. For this shortness of Life naturally instructs us to mind the things of this World the less, wherein we have so short a Time to stay: And it may likewise serve to Comfort us under the Miseries, Hardships and Misfortunes we meet with, that we have not long to endure them, before we are Reliev'd and

Released

Released from them by the Good Delivery of Death.

GOD is pleas'd to Allow us Time enough to prepare for a better Life, and what is more than that, would rather be an Injury, than any Benefit to us.

And then the Uncertainty of our Lives affords us a very serious and profitable Lesson, as well as the Shortness of them. For tho' Seventy or Eighty Years are allotted to the general Period of Life, yet they are very few who attain to that Age; and for our own Parts, we are uncertain whether we shall live one Year longer, or but a quarter or half a quarter of it. Vapours are Exhaled and Dispers'd again in a few Hours; and Shadows (to both which our Lives are Compared) flee away every Day, as soon as the Sun comes to its setting, or is but overshadowed with a Cloud.

How Numberless are the Diseases and other Accidents, that interrupt and break off this short Thread of Man's Life? We are Subject to Heats, Colds, Agues, Fevers, Consumptions, Convulsions of sundry sorts, and abundance of other Distempers which take their Time, and at one Season or another may surprize and seize us unawares. Besides Diseases of Infection, as the Plague and Small Pox; this latter especially prevails much, and carries away Multitudes, most Years, of all Ages and Sexes to their Graves.

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How many doth the Sword, and how many doth the Sea Devour, and how many loose their Lives by strange and unexpected Accidents? all which makes our little Allowance of Time shorter still, and plainly shews, that our continuance here is by no means to be Depended on.

These Distempers are too rife and visible to be Doubted of, but yet when any of these Messengers of Death will seize on us, we are wholly uncertain. They are apt to Surprise us, when we think least of them, and when we suspect no such Matter. As tho' they lay in Ambush for us, and like Bayliffs contrived to Arrest us secretly and unobserved.

From hence we may gather an Excellent Rule, which still be of great Advantage, if we make a right use of it; and that is, to look upon Death as near to us. The Youngest know not how near it may be to them, but the Aged may conclude it cannot be far off. It may be Presumed, that they have spent at least Three parts of their Four, and if they should Live out their Fourth part, and so fill up their whole Allowance of Time, yet it will quickly be gone, and Death will soon be with them. Let them think how sly and insensibly the other Three parts have stolen away from them; and when they expect, that the last part, should give them any louder Notice than all the former?

There is no *Cessation* of Arms allowed in this Warfare; Death will not be at *Truce* with any of the Sons of Men, for any certain Time; but for ought they know, they may be Attacked the next Day or Hour. Apoplexies surprize and carry off a great many, without giving them a Minutes warning before Hand. The beginnings of Sickness are generally Sudden and Unforeseen, so that People are Well and Dangerously Ill sometimes in the same Hour.

Our Life and Health are like the Weather, uncertain when at fairest. We suspect nothing when the Sun shines, but yet many times in a few Minutes, all is turned into Storms and Showers.

To keep our selves always in a Readiness, we should always be mindful of this Uncertainty, and expect that Death is very near, because for ought we know it may be so. We are apt to put off the Evil Day from one Year to another, and so to drive on: which is the Reason why the Thoughts of Death have such little Efficacy upon People.

Every Body knows they must Dye; but because they look upon it as at a Distance, they little Regard it. Whereas we ought to Live as tho' every Week were to be our last; for one Week or other will be so: and we know not which that is, before it comes. Thousands in

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the World who were Alive Yesterday, are Dead this Morning.

In this World we Live at all Adventures, and are secure of nothing, but only of this, that Death will not fail us at the last.

If it be Spring or Summer with us now, it will shortly be Autumn or Winter. Especially you who are Aged already, your Period cannot be far off. You are in the Autumn of your Age at present, after which the Dead of Winter will come on apace. And as in Autumn the Earth and Trees yield their Ripe Fruits, so you should have some good Fruits in Readiness to Offer unto GOD. The Fruit of good Works, will be a Sacrifice Acceptable to Him; and David saith, *good People shall bring forth more Fruit in Old Age, Psal. 92. 14.* To the Praise and Glory of GOD.

If you have attained to Maturity in this kind, 'tis no Matter how short your Time, or how near your Death is; for in that Case GOD will Transplant you into his Paradise, where you shall Flourish in an Eternal Spring; where there is no Winter, no Old Age, nor any of those sorrowful Incumbrances where-with Sin hath loaded our present Mortal Condition.

CHAP.

C H A P. XIV.

Of Preparation for Death.

GREAT and Weighty Affairs use not to be Transacted or Ventured upon by Wise People, without some due Caution and Preparation: because of the vast Consequence of such Actions, either to their Welfare or Damage. To Dye is the greatest thing that ever did, or ever can befall us, for it is a thing that can be done but Once, and at that Once, Determines our Perpetual Condition to unchangeable Happiness or Misery. Upon which Account, it requires, and most highly deserves, all the Thought and Care, that can be taken about it. If we are duly prepared, the sooner it comes, the better it is for us. *He has liv'd long enough in this World, who has fitted himself to leave it, in the assured hopes of a better.*

Indeed, it is our main Business in this World, to fit and prepare our selves to leave it, and get safe out of it. We are born to Dye, which is now the unavoidable Condition of our Nature: only whereas we are born Corrupt and Depraved, and deserve worse still by our Actual Transgressions; GOD is pleased to allow us Means and Helps to recover our selves, that we may be fit to Dye with Comfort.

Therefore He is pleased to give us the Light of his Law, and of his Gospel, to shew us our Defilements, and direct us how we may get clear of them. And whereas we find that *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh*, we are Advised and Commanded to follow the Conduct of the Spirit, and to *mortifie the Deeds of the Body*. We are not to take part with these latter, but to oppose and overcome them, and to abound in all the Fruits of the good Spirit of G O D, which He hath commanded us in his Word.

I say, G O D's Design and Command is, that we should thus cleanse our selves, and overcome the Corruptions of Nature; that being thus cleansed, we may be fit to return unto Him, and be received into His Favour and Presence.

For this cause, this Life is justly lookt upon as a state of Exercise, and as a state of Tryal and Probation. Whereby G O D try's us, to see what we will do, and what Courses we will take. If we take the way, he shews and advises us (which is most just and reasonable to be taken,) we shall in some measure recover the Divine Image, which will qualify us for our Removal from this Mortal and Miserable, into a pure Immortal and Heavenly State.

So that indeed our whole Life is, and ought to be a Preparation for Death; and the only way of making a sure and good Preparation, is to Live a Virtuous and Godly Life.

Such a Life cannot miss of a happy End, because it recommends us to the Favour of G O D, and gives us a Title to his Mercies and to his Promises. With such a Title in our Hands, we may Advance boldly towards the other World; and the Gates of Death. With such a Preparation, we need not fear to meet the King of Terrors, for in that Case, Death will become our Friend, nay, our Servant, to conduct us to our Happiness; and open the Gate for us, that leads to it.

That a due Preparation consists in this *Dieting and Cleansing* our selves, is evident from the End and Design of it. For to what purpose is our Preparation, but that at our Death we may go to G O D, and that by enjoying Him, and being put into the Possession of his Promises, we may be finally Happy with him? but these Ends can never be obtained, without being Purified and Sanctified. *For without Holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Heb. 12. 14. 'tis impossible to be admitted to the sight and Enjoyment of G O D, upon any other Terms.

From hence it follows on the other Hand, that Carnal Ungodly Persons are but in a bad Preparation for Death, and can have but uncomfortable Expectations therein.

If People will not part with their Vices, neither when they are Young, nor when they are Old, they must expect to go to Hell with them, for 'tis certain they cannot carry them with them to Heaven. Know ye not, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 6. 9. *that the Unrighteous shall not Inherit the Kingdom of God, be not Deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall Inherit the Kingdom of God.* Yet he tells them in the next Verse; and such were some of you, but ye are Washed, but ye are Sanctified, but ye are Justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

They had been such it seems, but they were changed and renewed, and that had put them into another State and Capacity, so that they were no longer excluded from the Kingdom of GOD.

Thus far the Grace of the Gospel goes, but no farther; it does not save Men in their Sins, but as they have forsaken them and are cleansed from them.

GOD does not pardon Sinners as Princes, sometimes pardon Malefactors, only out of Will and Power, without regarding whether they are Reclaimed or no. His pardon is always limited to an Inward Change, and to outward Amendment. Nothing can enter

into the New *Jerusalem*, Rev. 21. 27. (whereby Heaven is signified) that Defileth or Worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lye.

And therefore the Popish way of Pardoning upon Confession (joyned with any Degrees of Contrition) without Renovation and Amendment is a false deceitful way, that will never carry such half-Penitents to Heaven. People may confess their Sins, and make some shew of being Troubled for them, and yet be never the better, unless they forgo and forsake them. We must be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, otherwise Confessing of Sins, and forbearing to practice them for some time, is not sufficient. The Corrupt Habit must be broken, and Mortified, and Gracious and Virtuous Habits and Dispositions must be Implanted, before we can be fit for the Kingdom of G O D.

They who talk of going to Heaven without such Preparations, do but Dream and Deceive themselves. If they carry with them Wicked Habits and Dispositions into the other World, they will continue Wicked, and consequently Miserable for ever.

Death will no more Alter their Tempers, than the Landing in *France* or *Spain* Alters the Manners of those who are Transported thither. They change the Clime and the Country, but the Men are still the same, and their Conditions go along with them without Alteration.

The Death of such People may be compared to the Removing of a Sick Person from one Room to another; for which perhaps the Sick Person may have a Fancy, but it can do Him no Real good; because whither soever he goes, he carries his Distemper along with him; and till *that* be Rectified and Cured, 'tis in vain for him to think of being Healthy or Easy wherever he is. In like manner, 'tis not the removing out of this World, (tho' a Man go off with some good Wishes or Prayers) that will alter the Temper of his Mind, or make him fit for Heaven and Happiness, but it is his being Renewed and Sanctified that must qualify and prepare him for it.

Though it were possible (as it is not) for Wicked Men to go to Heaven, yet if they retain their Vile Affections there, they would find themselves never the Happier for their being there. For they would find there no Objects agreeable to their Carnal Minds, nothing wherein they could take any Delight or Pleasure. The Company, the Employment, the Enjoyments, are all such as they love not, or are Strangers to.

For what delight could they take in the Presence of GOD (who is the Supreme Happiness of Heaven) that never lov'd GOD nor car'd for Him? What Joy or Content could they have in the Company of Saints and Angels, who never lov'd good People or their Ways, but delighted always to Associate themselves

themselves with the Filthy and Profane? What Delight could they have in Adoring and Praising G O D, who never lov'd such Duties, but were always Averse to them? What Comfort or Entertainment could they find in Divine Contemplation, who never Thought of any thing above the reach of their Senses? All the Happiness such People understand, consists in Eating and Drinking, in Foolish Mirth and Carnal Enjoyments; and there being no such Objects or Enjoyments for them in the other Life, they would be wholly to seek both for Company and Entertainment, they would be like Fish in a fine Garden, quite out of their Element, that could take no Delight or Satisfaction in the Place, as being no way agreeable to them.

For Heaven (as is well observed by some) is as much a State as a Place. 'Tis a State of *Mind*, an Habit of Holiness, Purity and Goodness; and if these Vertues are practic'd, and we are Accustomed to them upon Earth, we have the Beginnings of the Works and Joys of Heaven within us, before we Dye and Remove thither.

By a Pious and Religious Conversation, good People take Possession of Heaven before Hand. They Live, they Love, they Think, they Converse as the Blessed do in Heaven (as far as the Impediments and Imperfections of their Mortal Condition will permit.) Their Hopes, their Hearts, their Treasures are

are there, and they only wait till **G O D** be pleas'd to Dismiss them from hence, and call them thither.

Such Persons are duly qualified and prepared for Death. Let them Dye sooner or later, their Condition is safe and secure. But they who will venture to Dye without these and such like Preparations, are like the Person in the Gospel, who pressed in to the Wedding Supper, without having on a Wedding Garment; who when he was examined was Speechless, and was turned out into utter Darknes, where was weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth.

CHAP. XV.

Of Preparation in particular.

IN Order to a due Preparation against Death and Judgment, the Scripture recommends the Duty of Almsgiving and Charity, in an especial manner. Calling it a good Foundation, and a laying up in store against the Time to come, that we may lay hold on Eternal Life, 1. Tim. 6. 19. And our Saviour calls it a being rich towards **G O D**, and a providing bags which wax not old, a Treasure in the Heavens which faileth not, Luke 12. 31. 23. And in another place,

place, He calls it, *Making to our selves friends in Heaven, who when these earthly Comforts fail, will receive us into everlasting Habitations, Luke 16. 9.* Nay, Christ's owning or rejecting Men at the Day of Judgment, is particularly Ascribed to their Kindness or Uncharitableness towards his Members, *Mat. 25.* In that Chapter the Judgment is described, and the grand Article the King our Blessed Saviour is said to examine upon, is Men's Charity or Uncharitableness, ver. 34. He will say to the One sort, to wit, the Charitable, *Come ye blessed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World:* and to the other, the Unmerciful, he will say, *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

'Tis certain and evident, That the Kingdom of Heaven is promised to no one Duty so expressly, as to this of Alms and Charity.

They who Believe the Gospel and hope for the Rewards it propounds, and for the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the great Reward of all, should by no Means dare to neglect this Duty, to which the Happiness of Heaven is so peculiarly Annexed,

It is one singular Instance and Tryal of our Obedience to our Saviour, when we are willing at His Command and for His Sake, to shew Mercy on His poor Servants. 'Tis a sign that his Love is Predominant in our Hearts,

Hearts, above the World and all Worldly Affections. And it is a sign we have a lively Faith in him, when we can part with what we have now in Hand, in hope and expectation of what he has promised hereafter.

To make a fair Profession, and perform a great many other good Duties, will not Avail, if this Grace be wanting. To Abstain from Murder, Adultery, Theft, false Witness, to Honour one's Father and Mother, and to Love his Neighbour as himself: These are All considerable Duties; but yet without this Charity, they are Defective and Insufficient, as we learn by that Discourse of our Saviour with the Young Man in the Gospel, *Mat. 19.* the want of Charity in him spoiled all his other good Qualities, and shut him out from Eternal Life, which he came to inquire and seek after.

Indeed, the Selling of all, and parting with the Gross of his Estate, was a peculiar Command of our Saviour, which cannot be Thought to oblige all Christians, for that would destroy all Capacity of giving any more than once; and so if it were observed strictly and literally, would banish Almsgiving and Charity out of the World. Nevertheless, it was his Duty, to have paid Obedience to our Saviour's immediate Command; who could and would have rewarded him an Hundred Fold, for all he had parted with. And his not doing it, lost him a Treasure infinitely greater and more valuable, because (for ought appears)

pears) he was excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, for his Disobedience and Covetousness together.

This should serve for a warning to every good Christian, who hopes for a share in the Mercies and Promises of G O D, to watch against this Miserable Temper, and strive to overcome it. For as long as our Hearts are so linked to our Possessions, that we cannot part with them, to obey G O D or do good therewith, we shall not be fit to leave this World; or if we are forc't to it, we are like to have no part or Portion in the World to come.

Indeed, it is not in the power of many People to give much, and of such much is not required; but tho' their Abilities are mean, yet there is a *willing mind* required. 'Tis necessary their Hearts should be loose from the Love of their Earthly Goods, and that they do not place their Happiness in them, lest G O D leave them to their Choice; and then, when they leave this World, they will have none at all to comfort them.

But they who are bountiful in this kind, have a particular immediate Right, thro' the Gracious promise of G O D, to an Eternal Reward.

Indeed, Bounty and Beneficence make Men resemble G O D in the World; above most other Religious qualities. G O D is good to All. The whole Earth is full of his Bounty and Riches, which he Communicates

municates to his Creatures according to their Needs. but some of his Disposition and

Particularly, He hath undertaken to help the Poor, and the Fatherless and Widow. Not that they can Ordinarily expect Help and Relief immediately from His hand; but He makes use of the Bountiful and Charitable Offices of good People for their Help and Relief. Such good People are in the World in God's stead. They pay his Debts; and make good his Promises; and 'tis no wonder, if they who lend to G O D in this kind (as He is Graciously pleas'd to Interpret their Charity) be liberally paid back again; and surely so they are, if all be considered.

For first he pays them in this World, as appears by the manifold Temporal Blessings promised to the Charitable Person. I shall mention one of these Promises, because it seems to relate not only to a present Prosperity, but also to a Favourable Death. *Psal. 41.* I. a Blessing is pronounced to him that considereth the poor and needy; And *vers. 3.* it is said the Lord will strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishing, Thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness. Which seems to intimate, that because the Charitable Man has Pity on the Miseries and Distresses of the Poor, G O D will make him Amends, by Abating to him the usual Extremities of Sickness, and shortning the Pains and Agonies of his Death.

Secondly,

Secondly, G O D repays the Charitable Person with the vast and invaluable Rewards of the other World, as has been already mentioned. He shall be Rewarded there with a Kingdom, which must be granted for he an excessive Compensation for the poor Pittances we are able to give.

Wealth seldom does good to the Souls of the Possessors, but many times it does them a great deal of Injury (*viz.*) by undue Covering, and unjust Getting, and riotous Spending. Only by laying it out in Charity, it may be turned to that happy Account, as to enrich our Souls; and do them good in their endless Duration. Which is a sufficient Engagement to this kind of Liberality; for what more can be said to recommend it, than that it is a necessary Preparation for an happy Death, and a Blessed Life after Death?

C H A P. XVI.

Some other particulars, by way of Preparation.

TO Proceed a little farther on this great Subject of Preparation for Death. There is another Expedient, that may be of great Use to this purpose. If we would fit our selves for the other World as we ought, we should withdraw our Affections from the things of this World; as we expect in a short time to leave all these things, so we should endeavour to be loose and disengaged from them.

That

That this is proper Advice, I think is very Evident. For to be immers'd and engaged in Matters of this Life, when we are preparing to leave it, and exchange it for another Life and State, must in all likelihood be a hindrance to our Preparation, and is in it self a very preposterous improper course.

It will not be long before we must put off these Corruptible Bodies, and leave this Corruptible World. We should therefore endeavour to Devest our Souls of Worldly and Bodily Affections. The World and the Body have ever been Enemies to the Soul, and so they will continue always to be.

If we enquire into the Rise and Spring of the Evil and Corrupt Inclinations of Humane Nature, I see not from whence they can arise or be derived to us, but from the Body. The Soul being united to the Body, is Corrupted and Infected thereby. As pure Lignor put into an impure Unfavoury Vessel contracts a Taint and an ill Savour from it; so the Body infects the Mind, and Tinctures it with hurtful Passions, and carnal Propensities; from which we must recover (as far as they are Sinful) before we can be fit for the World of Spirits; that World where Holiness and Happiness Reign.

It is not required of good People, that they should too much neglect the Body, or that they should wholly renounce the World and the necessary Comforts of it, as long as they live here. But their Care should be, so to

use them, as that they may not be hindered thereby from looking after and securing to themselves those endless and better Enjoyments.

The false Riches should not hinder the true, (as our Saviour distinguishes, Luke 11.) neither should gross Momentary Pleasures make them forget and lose the Eternal Joys and Pleasures of the Life to come.

To speak more plainly and particularly, Good People ought (in Order to a good Preparation) to moderate their Affections, and their Enjoyments, and their Cares and Pursuits, and every thing that concerns this Transitory Life.

First, they ought to moderate their Affections, and to regulate them so, that they be not placed on wrong Objects, nor exceed their due Measure when rightly placed, but

Earthly Things are improper Objects of our Love, Desire and Delight. As best they are unworthy of any High Degrees of them; not only because of the Emptiness, Vanity and Worthlessness of them, but because we must shortly leave them, and shall never any more Return to them.

Tho' we should suppose them to be of considerable value in themselves, yet they can be but of little value to us, because we cannot stay by them to enjoy them. When we enjoy them at the highest, they afford but a few and low Degree of Satisfaction, and that mixt with Vanity and Trouble; but, because we cannot enjoy

enjoy them long, such as they are, they will deserve a lower Degree of our Affection. 'Tis a Folly to be fond of that we cannot keep; or suffer our Hearts to be Wedded to that from which we know we must shortly be Divorced by Death.

Besides, the Immoderate love of the World is inconsistent with the love of GOD. So we are told and warned by St. John, 1 Epist. s. 14, 15, *Love not the World, nor the things that are in the World, if any man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him.* After which he specifies, *the lust of the Flesh, the lust of the Eyes, and the pride of Life.* Under the Lust or Concupiscence of the Flesh, are Comprehended the Objects of our Senses and Appetites, from which good People ought to Abstain as far as the Necessities and Conveniences of the Body will suffer.

For to what purpose should they Pamper their Bodies, who expect ere long to lay them down in the Dust, and to yield them up a Prey to Worms and Putrefaction?

And so for the other Gratifications of our Senses and Appetites, they ought not to be much Minded; not only because they are apt to Obscure the better Pleasures of the Mind, but also because in a few Days, they Perish and come to nothing. Frequent Devout Prayers and Liberal Alms (which are had in remembrance with GOD) are more agreeable to the Business of a Christian, than full Sumptuous Meals, which gratify the Palate

for

for a little while, and then falls into the
Draught.

You who are Aged, ought especially to
Abstain from the Pleasures of the World,
or to use them very sparingly, for divers Rea-
sons. Namely, because they did you so lit-
tle good in your Youth, when you were more
capable of them. Perhaps I may say, be-
cause they have done you so much Mischief
in your Youth, therefore they deserve not the
Favour and Approbation of your Ripper Age.
Then you were carried towards them by the
Instinct of Nature, and the Propensities of
the Body, and consequently were more ex-
cusable than you will be now, when those
Inclinations and Propensities are abated, and
almost extinguished. You are in great mea-
sure past those Gratifications, and therefore
be not so vain as to fancy them, or long af-
ter them. Take Example by *Barzilai*, who
Declined going to David's Court, for this
good Reason, because he had not long to
Live, and because he was past the Gayeties
and Delicacies of it, *1 Sam. 19. 34*. It will
argue a Corrupt Mind, to pursue after them,
now they are past by, and are fleeing away
from you. You ought rather to deny and
forsake them before they forsake you, that
your parting with them, may appear to
be a matter of Vertue and Choice, and not
of Necessity.

With him for ever.

To quit the pursuit of Carnal Objects and
Enjoyments, when you can follow them no
longer, will be no Thanks to you. You
ought to leave them before the *evil day come,*
and the years draw nigh, when you shall say
you have no pleasure in them. Eccles. 12. 1.

The Happiness you hope for, is of another
Nature and kind, vastly different, and in some
measure contrary to these Sensual satisfactions.
You are going into a pure, immaterial refined
World, where there is *neither Eating, nor*
Drinking, Marrying nor giving in Marriage,
and therefore you should mind the Entertain-
ments of the Body less, and begin to ac-
quaint your selves with the Delights of
Spirits.

Accustom your selves to delight in Holy
Contemplation (as far as you are capable of
it) and to Rejoyce in Hope.

Sweet Hopes will nourish
your souls. Job. 42c. and minister greater
Mortification and Containment to the Mind
than Bodily Enjoyments
can do. Bethink you of

the Glories of the other World, and how
Divine and Excellent they are. Assure your
selves of the Reality of them by Faith, and
of your nearness to them by your Age and
Bodily frailties. Solace your selves in the
Hopes you have of seeing your Saviour in all
his Glory, and being where he is, and living
with him for ever.

In the mean while comfort your selves with the sense of GOD's Presence with you, and Providence over you, and with that Gracious Promise of His, That He *will never leave you nor forsake you*, Heb. 13. 5. Believe that He loves you, and takes a care of you, and dwells with you (tho' in an invisible manner.) Be assured, that if you continue to Love and Obey Him, he designs to bring you to Heaven, and to make you Gloriously happy for evermore.

These Thoughts will help to bear up your Spirits, and to stay and satisfy your Minds, better than any Worldly Objects you can have recourse to.

Again, to lighten your Pilgrimage, you may divert and delight your selves with the Company of good People, who love Religion, and excel in Virtue.

And indeed, of all the Things we enjoy here, our Religious and Faithful friends and Relations, are the most proper and warrantable Objects of our Love and Delight. Because they resemble GOD, and are the Members of Christ; and because we hope to Live with them, and to have their Company in the other World. But to all other Pleasures and Enjoyments you ought to be very indifferent, because they are of a mean kind, and because it will not be long, before you are quite removed from them. The Places you have seen you shall see no more; The Houses you have Built or Inhabited, you will be

turn'd out of, Your Repasts and Entertainments, as well as your Appetites will be quite vanisht and gone; The Pastimes you delighted in, shall divert you no longer. You must be provided with new Joys and Pleasures, or else you are like to have none for ever.

So likewise the desires of Wealth and Greatness ought to be moderated and reduced, or they will hinder your Preparation, and make you unfit for an happy Death.

It happens too often, that the Greatest and Richest, are not the Best or Happiest Men. But 'tis certain, those Circumstances are of no Advantage to them, when they come to Dye. In Death the highest have no Preeminence above the meanest. And as to the Consequences of Death, Wealth and Greatness, are so far from promoting the Eternal Welfare of the Owners, that they often prove a Hindrance and a Scare, and are the Occasion of their Ruin and Destruction. So we read it happened to the Rich Glutton, whose Wealth betrayed him to Luxury, and his Luxury and Unmercifulness occasioned his being *Tormented in Hell*, Luke 16.

Great Wealth is a very dangerous thing; that has nothing Excellent or Defensible in it, but only the Ability it gives of doing greater good: let aside that End and Use of it, and all the rest is very Dangerous both to Body and Soul. For it ministers manifold Temptations, and is very apt to be abused to Vain-
 glory

nity and Sensuality fill Men full of themselves and with a false conceit of Happiness, and is apt to make them negligent and remiss about the Service of G O D, and the care of their Souls.

You who are Aged, ought in a special manner, to Watch over your selves in this respect, because Age is observed to incline Men to Covetousness, it becomes you so to demean your selves, that you may clear your selves of that Reproachful Suspicion. You ought, in a particular manner, to contract your Cases, and your Desires, and your Designs, and your Secular Business.

For why? can you never think it is enough? can you never think it Time to give over? When you have done what is Decent for your Selves and Families, and for the Works of Charity, (which ought not to be forgotten) you should give over getting, that it may appear, your Thrift and Frugality was for good Reasons and Ends, and that when those Reasons are answered and those Ends served, you will proceed no farther, in those frugal Methods. If you go on still to spare, when the Occasions are over, you discover a Disease, which keeps you always Thirsty and Insatiable.

You cannot be fit to Dye in such a Posture of Mind, for it looks, as tho' you thought your Happiness consisted in the Multitude of your Possessions, and makes it very Suspicious, that you have no Treasures in Heaven, be-

cause your Hearts and Thoughts are so intent upon heaping up Treasures upon Earth.

The Scripture tells us 'tis a Straight Gate, and a Narrow Way, through which Men enter into Life; and therefore great and cumbersome Burdens of Earth are very improper, because they make the entrance more Difficult, if not Impossible.

'Tis a new World to which you are going, and all your Old Furniture must be left behind; and since you cannot carry it away with you, to what purpose should you Labour to increase it to the very Last?

If you say, you provide for the Welfare of your Families, you say well. But are they not moderately provided for already? if they are, that ought to satisfy you.

The future Prosperities of Families are uncertain, and of no great Moment; but an everlasting State of Happiness for your selves after Death, is a thing of the highest Importance, and is worth more than all this World comes to.

We are taught by some passages in Scripture, that this visible World, and all things in it, that is, its Cities and Buildings, its Riches and Rarities, its Furnitures and Treasures, shall in Time be all Burnt up. And what then will become of those Men who repose their Happiness in Goods and Estates? Nay, 'tis probable from some Passages, that this visible World is set on Fire, *that is, the* *the Hell of ungodly men.* 2 Pet. 3. 7. So that they

may likely be Tormented in the midst of their own Lands and Possessions, and in those very Places, where they Roted and Oppressed, and followed their other ungodly Courses. Herein we dare not be positive, but this is certain, *Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Prov. 11. 4.* And it is likewise evident, That the Unstable and Perishing Nature of every Earthly thing, together with the shortness of our Lives, should fasten upon us that most rational and pious Inference of the Apostle, *1 Cor. 7. 29.* *It remains, that both they who have Wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this World as not abusing it, because the fashion of this World passeth away.*

How many are the Pains, Sorrows, Distresses, Mistresses, and Vexations of this Life? So many that it is almost impossible to

CHAPTER XVII.

That Death should not seem terrible to good People.

THE former Directions, may by GOD'S Blessing, help you in some Measure towards a good Preparation for Death. But farther, that you may be rightly disposed for it, 'tis requisite that you Embrace it when it Approaches, with a willing Mind. Look upon it as a Friend that comes to open the Gate,

Get, and be you in to the Joys and Happiness of the other World. And therefore accept in good Office kindly, and seem not averse from coming to that, wherein you declare to believe, that all your Hopes of Happiness lie.

To be afraid of that, which all sorts and Conditions of People undergo, and that which we believe Ministers to the exceeding Happiness of good People, is certainly a Weakness and Misfortune, if not a Fault.

One main Cause of Fear seems to be, because Death is Accompanied with Pain and Uneasiness. But if it frees us from greater Pains, Sorrows, and Inconveniences than those it brings, it ought to be more kindly thought of, and to have that Reproach and Prejudice taken off from it.

How many are the Pains, Sorrows, Diseases, Misfortunes, and Vexations of this Life? So many that 'tis almost Impossible to reckon them All up. They renew and return so frequently upon us, that 'tis seldom we are free from some or other of them. They are the common Lot and Entertainment of Life; the common Burden which GOD in his Justice hath laid upon us for our Sins.

Aged People need least to be told of these Maladies, for generally they have a more quick and present Experience of them than other People. Gout, Stone, Strangury, Cramps, Aches, Rheums, Faintings, and plenty

plenty of other Grievances, are the common Attendants and Incumbrances of that last Stage of Life. They are the Forerunners of Death, and where they lye heavy upon People, they should in all Reason, dispose them for a willing Departure.

For why? If Sickness or Pain make your Life Burdensome, Death is a certain Remedy and Release. If Poverty and Necessity pinch you, Death Advances your Fortune, and sets you on a Level with the Richest and Noblest. If Crosses and Vexations molest and trouble you, you may lay them All down in the Grave, and rest very quietly by them. So that computing one thing with another, Death cures more Pain than it brings, and delivers from more Inconveniences than those which attend it.

Indeed, if we consider this Life, according to the true Nature and State of it, we shall find, that we have more just Reason to be afraid of Living than Dying. For as long as we live in this World, we are Subject to innumerable Sorrows, to continual Temptations, to manifold Errors and Failings. We are engaged in a Dangerous Warfare with the Devil and all his Accomplices; we are Daily in Danger of falling into Sin, through the Vanity of our Thoughts and Desires, and the Excesses of our Passions and Appetites. And by these Means we are Detained in a State of Grief and Repentance, which is a State much rather to be Bewailed than Desired.

fired. And yet such weak Creatures we are, as to be fond of Life, which loads us with these Miseries and Inconveniences, and to be afraid of Death which quits and releases us from them. In all reason, we ought rather to be well pleased and thankful, for, were it not for the Remedy and Release of Death, the Sorrows and Calamities of Life would be endless and intolerable.

If any thing be to be Dreaded in natural Death, it is the forerunners of it, viz. the Pains and Extremities of Sickness. But to these, Death puts a final Stop and Period. When that comes, all Pains and Agonies of the Body are at an End. Then the Body falls into an insensible State, and the Soul is Discharged from being a Copartner any longer in its Agonies and Distresses. Then good People may reckon, that the Temporal forfeiture of Sin is paid; and that the Curse is taken off, the last part of which was this painful Separation.

And is this a reasonable or proper Object for our fears, to be dismissed from all the Evils and Difficulties of our Mortal State? If we Acted according to the Principles of our Faith and Hope, or according to the Sentiments of right Reason, we should be ashamed of such Demeanour.

The Ape, which is said to grow pale at the sight of a Snail, is not so ridiculous, as these our Fears are.

'Tis plain we are not herein, as we use to do in other Cases of the like Nature. When we are engaged in a Dangerous tedious Journey, we are glad when we are come to the End of it. When we are tyed with the Labours and Drudgeries of the Day, we are glad to go to Bed and be at Rest. When we have been engaged in a long and troublesome Attendance, we are willing and joyful to be Dismiss'd and Discharg'd. And why then should we be afraid of Death, which is in Effect the end of our Journey, and the Harbour of Rest, and a Dismission from our wearisome Labours and Travels?

Besides, Death in the Nature and Definition of it, is but a Separation of the Soul and Body, wherein neither part is lost or perisheth finally. 'Tis but like the taking of a Clock or some curious piece of Art asunder, not to receive any Damage, but to be made cleaner and brighter, and fit to be put together again when the Artist pleaseth.

And to Rebate this Fearfulness, to which most People are too Subject, the Scripture represents Death by the softest and most harmless Resemblances.

Our Saviour Himself terms it a Sleep in the Case of *Lazarus*, *Joh. 11. 11*. 'Tis but a Sleep without Breathing, a Sleeping in our Winding Sheet, which implies Rest and Repose, rather than any thing of Terror. 'Tis call'd a Departure, in *St. Paul's Phil. 1. 23* add with Allusion probably to those Places where Believers

Believers are styled Pilgrims and Strangers. 'Tis no such great matter for a Stranger or Traveller to Depart, that he may return to his Country and proper home. Such a Departure should seem Desirable rather than any way Grievous or Offensive. 'Tis styled a gathering to our Fathers, Gen. 25. 8. and who would not be willing to go to his Fathers, and Friends, and Religious Ancestors? Job calls it a *Change*, for which he waited with expectation, Job 14. 14. 'Tis no Loss or Cessation of Being, but only a Change; A Change of Place, a Change of Condition, a Change of Company, a Change of Enjoyments, and a Change much for the better in all these Respects. For is not Heaven or Paradise a better place than Earth? and are not Saints and Angels better Company, than the mixt Multitude we converse with here? And is not Love, and Joy, and Divine Contemplation, and the refined Pleasures of the Heavenly Court, better and more Desirable than Labour and Drudgery, and the gross poor Entertainments of our Senses? and is not an Eternal Unchangeable Duration, to be preferred before an unsettled Allowance of Forty or Sixty, or Seventy Years.

So that look beyond Death to its great Privileges and Advantages, and it has vastly the better of this Life: because it lets good People into Joys and Enjoyments incomparably greater, than any they part with: and the Sorrows they pass through in Death, are nothing

nothing in comparison of the Happiness to which they are Admitted by it.

But there is one cause of this Timorourness yet behind, which is the justest and greatest of All, and that is, when People are Conscious to themselves, that they are unprepared for Death. When they have Lived so Foolishly and Irreligiously, that they have no Hope in their Death, then they have reason to Dread Death as their Goaler or Executioner.

But if this be the Case with any, 'tis their own Fault, and the Design and Business of this little Treatise, is, through GOD's Blessing, to recover such into a new and better State. If they will be Converted and Renewed (as GOD desires and requires they should be) their Sins and their Fears, as they depend upon one another, so they will vanish and be gone together.

But then they must be sure, that this Renovation be effectually Wrought in them; otherwise Death is, and ought to be very dreadful to all Dissolute Ungodly Persons. For Hell is a wretched Place, and the Devil is a Merciless Tyrant, and the Torments of Fire (or somewhat Equivalent to them) are the most fierce and furious Torments; and to all these, the most Desperate Addition is, that they are Endless and Remediless, when once Men are fallen into them.

And therefore this Chapter concerns not Irreligious Persons, any otherwise than to warn them, and exhort them to Repentance and a due Preparation.

The Servants of GOD are the Persons who are thus Privileged in their Death, and Advanced by it to an unchangeable State of Life and Glory. They have cause to rejoice and be glad, because their Sins and Sorrows are come to an End, and because they are arrived at their Rest, and their Reward is great in Heaven.

But if after all, such Persons by reason of their Weakness, are not able to govern their Fears, they must be Comforted with them, and must beg of GOD to strengthen their Faith, and to keep and comfort them, whilst they Walk through the Valley and Shadow of Death.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of the Desire of Life, and the Fear of Death, with the true Decision thereof.

It appears by what hath been said in the former Chapter, that the Happiness of good People lies not in this Life, which is of a mean and mixt Condition, but in the other State which follows after Death.

Nevertheless, Life is generally much valued and desired, and Death as much dreaded and avoided, which is a Problem that deserves a little to be inquired into.

That it is so in Fact, must be acknowledged, and so it always was, for so Satan had observed in his long experience, *Job 2. 4. skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his Life.* But upon a strict Enquiry it will be found, that this Valuation proceeds rather from Error and Mistake, than from sound Judgment, and a right Estimate of Things.

This present Mortal Life, cannot be much worth in it self for divers Reasons.

First, Because it is short and Transitory, which mightily Derogates from the Worth and Value of it. 'Tis like an Estate for a Month or six Weeks, which no Body can think to be worth the Purchasing. We have in us Desires of Living and Abiding for ever; and this short Life bearing no proportion to those Desires, must leave them unanswered and unsatisfy'd, and consequently must leave us so too; the Effect whereof is uneasiness and Disappointment.

Secondly, This Life cannot be much worth, because it is liable to so many Evils, Calamities, Distresses and Vexations. The highest and happiest here, are not free and secure from these, which is an evident Lessening and Disparagement of the State it self. The other State of Death, is much to be prefer'd

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on this Account, because that puts a Man
past all Danger, and past all Suspicion of
Danger, even beyond the reach of Misery
and Misfortune.

Thirdly, The End of Life is Painful and
Afflictive, which is an Abatement to its worth
and esteem. For the end of things is chiefly
to be regarded, and where that is expected to
be Dismal or Unfortunate, it casts a Damp
upon all the intermediate Enjoyments. The
Fear and Expectation of Death and its Tra-
gical Solemnities, keeps People in a kind of
perpetual Bondage, as we read it did the
Jews, Heb. 2. 15.

To think, that after a Man has liv'd all
his Time in a prosperous State, he must at
last be turn'd out of all, pack'd off poor
and naked, shut up in a cold Grave, void of
all Sense and Enjoyment, is a Melancholy
Thought, and a shrewd Diminution of his
former Prosperities. Such an Epilogue spoils
the whole Comedy, and the Conclusion is
enough to Disparage all the foregoing History.

Fourthly, This Life deserves not to be much
regarded, because it detains good People from
their Happiness, and hinders them of better
things than any it can afford them.

There is no Reason to Doubt, but that
G O D will bestow a full and complete Hap-
piness upon his rational Religious Creatures,
but in this World there is no such thing to be
found, which renders the Condition of it the
more mean and contemptible.

You will say, if this be the Case, how comes it to pass, that Life is so much Coveted and Desired?

I Answer, Tho' in comparison of the Future, this Life deserves little to be esteemed, yet there are some good Things in it, for which it deserves a *lower* degree of Respect and Regard.

Particularly first, There is in it the good of Being; I mean a *Self-consciousness* of Being, the Sense of which is like a Treasure in every Man's bosom, from which no Man can be made willing to depart, unless it be in the Case of endless and incurable Misery. The Brute Creatures, which are void of Reason and Design, are nevertheless very Tenacious in this respect, endeavouring the Preservation of Life, out of natural Instinct, which GOD has implanted in all Creatures.

To this purpose, He hath Cemented the Principles of Life so strongly and closely together, that they cannot be parted without Pain and Violence. Which was so ordered with great Wisdom; to keep People in Subjection to the Will and Discipline of Providence. For if they could Relinquish this Life when they pleased, with the same Ease as they remove from one Place to another; the World would probably, in a short Time, be left Desolate and Uninhabited. People would be apt to leave it, that they might be rid of their Misfortunes, and every little Cross or Discontent, would make them *Desert* and

and run away from their Stations: whereas now the parting with Life is so hard and violent, that no small Matter will provoke them to endeavour it. Even poor Distressed People, whose Lives are many times no better than a Burden and a Punishment, are nevertheless so much addicted to Life, that they will endure almost any thing, rather than they will forgo it: which is ingeniously represented in that Fable; wherein a poor Old Man tyred with an heavy Burden, is said to call upon Death to come and relieve him; but when it appeared to him, he excused himself and told Death, he wanted him only to help him up again with his Burden.

Thirdly, This Life is valuable, as it is the proper Season of providing for the Life to come. Indeed, the Excellency of it lyes chiefly herein, that it gives us Opportunity of making such Provision. It is not worth much in it self for the Reasons before Alledged, but it is very considerable in this Respect, that if we use it well, it may be the means of Advancing us to somewhat better.

They who spend their Life in Serving, Praising, and Obeying GOD, and doing all the good they are able, according to his Appointment, are sure to rise in Time, from this Mortal State, to a Life of Glory and Immortality.

So that upon the whole Matter, this Life is a mixt Compounded thing, that is made up of Sweet and Bitter, but this latter is the most prevailing Ingredient of the Two.

Which

Which may serve to lessen our Admiration of it, and should excite our Diligence, to make the best of it, which is, in this short Season, to fit our selves for that future Life, which is endless and glorious.

In the next place, let us enquire a little into the State of Death, and see what Reputation and Esteem it deserves, being compared with Life.

It cannot be Denied, but that in Fact, it lies under some Disrepute, and has the Disadvantage in Vulgar Esteem. Which seems to proceed from such mistaken Reasons as these. First, that Death is accompanied with pain and other Difficulties and Distresses which make way for it. But I have shewed before, that this is a mistake, for all Pain and Suffering belongs to Life, and Death visibly puts an End to all Distresses and Sufferings of the Body.

Secondly, It is vulgarly look't upon as an End and Cessation of Being, which gives Occasion of Prejudice against it. Because People neither see, nor hear any more of the Dead after they are Departed, therefore they are apt to entertain a secret Suspicion, that they are properly lost and Abolished.

The Heathen indeed had Reason, to look upon Death as an Enemy, because for ought they know, it was no better than an utter and final Extirpation of Being. They had no certain Assurance of another Life after Death.

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122 *Of the Desire of Life and Fear*
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that swallowed up and devoured every thing
that fell into it.

Indeed, such an Opinion is dismal enough
to those who believe it: for the Sense of
Being has a Natural Sweetness in it, that
Delights and Comforts; and consequently
whatsoever threatens, or implies the loss of
Being, must be as unwelcome as it is Discon-
solate and Destructive.

But, Blessed be G O D, there is no such
Terror in Death as this comes to. For Death
is nothing else but a little Pause, betwixt
this and the future Life. 'Tis like a dark
Entry thro' which we pass, that we may be
Conveyed into the Rooms of State. There
is no Discontinuance of being in it, no Loss or
Diminution of any Faculty; but it is atten-
ded with a mighty Improvement of our Minds
in Light and Knowledge, 2 Tim. 1. 10. Our
Saviour has brought the Doctrine of Life and
Immortality to Light by his Gospel; so that
they who look upon Death as an Extermination
of Being, must be perfect Unbelievers. The
Gospel

of Death, with the Decision thereof. 123

Gospel reaches in Effect, that *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob* live with G O D, though their Bodies have been Dead some Thousands of Years. That the Rich Man and *Lazarus* were received after Death, the one into a place of Rest and Felicity, signified by *Abraham's* Bosom, and the other into a place of restless and extreme Torment *Mat. 10. 28.*

It assures us, that the Soul cannot be killed with the Body, and if the Soul lives after the Body is Dead, Death can import no loss of Being, but only a Separation. These passages and sundry others, evidently prove, that good People lose nothing in Death, but only exchange their Condition of being, and that vastly to their Advantage. They remove to such a State, as is excellent beyond all Comparison; such as they never saw any thing like it. I believe I may say, you never saw an Angel; there you shall behold Legions of them. You never saw an unbodied Soul or Spirit; there you shall behold Multitudes, and embrace them, and converse with them, and joyn with them in all their Holy Exercises and Divine Enjoyments.

You never saw your Saviour Christ Jesus, who loved you, and gave Himself for you; there you shall see Him and behold his Glory, and live in his Presence. You do not know what Mansions He hath prepared for his Servants; but then you shall be admitted into them. You cannot tell what the Joys

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and Enjoyments of Heaven are, but after Death you shall see and partake of them. They must be great and excellent, because they are of GOD's furnishing and providing, who will not fail to entertain his Friends and Servants, according to the Greatness and Majesty of so great a King. We are not able to Describe these things, only we say thus much, that you may be convinced, that there is no loss in Death to good People; no Damage sustained thereby, but that on the contrary they are wonderful Gainers by the Change.

A third thing which Occasions the fear of Death, seems to be the Effects of it upon the Bodily part, because it Deforms and Defaces that, depriving it of Sense Beauty and Comeliness. And indeed, Death hath its effect chiefly on the Body, which it Transforms to its present Disadvantage. But the Body being the Corruptible part, and that which the Curse did immediately light on, 'tis no wonder it should be sown in Dishonour according to the Apostles Expression, 1 Cor. 15. 42. It is but the *Husk* or *Shell* of the Soul; and therefore of Course must be broken, before the Soul can be emitted into its purer and more perfect State.

The Damage hereby sustained is light and inconsiderable, for the Body suffers nothing during the Separation, and that is only for a Season. For in the Resurrection, we are assured, that the Body shall be advanced to new Degrees of Beauty and Perfection, and

and that it shall be a Celestial and a glorious Body. 1 Cor. 15.

Fourthly, The want of Faith, and of higher degrees of Virtue and Goodness, is that which promotes the fear of Death, and causes an Averseness from coming to it. People do not heartily Believe the Revelation of God, relating to that future Blessed Life. They are doubtful and that makes them fearful. They are afraid to part with what they have, because they are not sure there is any better Provision made for them elsewhere.

But this is great Folly, as well as Infidelity. 'Tis Folly, because they are afraid of that, which they must of Necessity come to, and Endeavour to quit themselves of that, which it is impossible for them to avoid. Death is not to be shunned by any Means, and therefore to decline it, or think of shrinking from it, is the effect of Weakness and Simplicity.

And then it is Infidelity likewise, (at least in Consequence) which is inconsistent with our Christian Profession. It is as much in effect, as to say, that all Religion is a Deception, and that God's Word is not to be trusted, and that He is neither able nor willing to make His Servants Happy after Death; than which, nothing worse, more untrue or wicked, can be said or Devised.

Secondly, 'Tis not only want of Faith, but want of higher Degrees of Virtue and Goodness, that makes People so much dread Death and have so little Comfort in the Thoughts of

126 *That Death is Desirable, and should*
it. They are Conscious to themselves, that they
deserve no favour or reward from the Hand of
God, and therefore they cannot think they shall
receive any. They are afraid they shall not bet-
ter themselves, by exchanging this Life for a
nother, and therefore they earnestly desire and
endeavour, to keep themselves where they are.
But this desire they can never accomplish, and
therefore their wise way will be, to fit them-
selves for the favour of God, by attending
more carefully to their Christian Duty; and
by that means their fears and discouragements
will be removed, and they will be able to
conceive Comfort and good Hope in Death.
If they will amend what is amiss, and believe
and live as Christians ought to do, their de-
sires of Life will be more moderate, and in-
stead of dreading, they will see cause to
rejoice, when they apprehend, that the Sen-
tence of Death is pronounced upon them.

C H A P. XIX.

That Death is Desirable, and should be welcome
to good People.

THAT Death, and the Thoughts and Ap-
proaches of it, ought to be welcome to
good Christians, appears plainly from hence,
because to all such it is a real gain and advan-
tage; 'tis a vast Amendment and Improvement
of their Condition; and of such alterations all
wise People are desirous. A state of Happiness
is all we can desire, and in Death alone such a
state is to be found. Our

Our Condition in this World, is but mean and imperfect at the best, and in many Cases very Uneasy and Calamitous, and surely it must be worth the while, to exchange such Circumstances for better.

Would it not be a Joy to afflicted People to be assured, that at such a time their Pain shall cease, or their Poverty be relieved, or their Sickness cured? Sure enough this would be a joyful Message to every one, who labours under any such Distress. And is it not a shame then that we should be afraid of Death, which is the most certain and Universal Deliverance from all the labours and distresses of this Life?

Indeed, we ought to bear our burdens with Patience, till God is pleased to Release us, and therefore it would be a fault to hasten our Death, by being any way accessory to it: but it is our Duty to meet it with Courage, and to bid it welcome, when God sends it.

We read not only of several of the old Romans, but of divers Indians, both Princes and People, who scorned to stay for a lingering natural Death; when the Pleasures and Vigour of Life were over, and Infirmities began to grow heavy upon them, they used to dispatch themselves, and so to be before hand with Death, rather than wait for its solemn and tedious approaches. Such Rashness we pretend not to Justify; 'tis what God has expressly forbidden under the general Prohibition of Murder. We ought to wait God's leisure, and to endure his Discipline, till he is pleas'd

128 *That Death is Desirable, and should*
to discharge us, but to be afraid of being discharged; to shrink and draw back at the offers of a Deliverance, is weak and pusillanimous, and much unworthy of our Christian Profession and Expectations.

Again, Death obliges good People upon another account, in that it frees them, not only from natural bodily Evils, but also from Sin, which is worse than all the rest. Sin is the greatest Evil of All, for it is the cause of all the rest. 'Tis that which disturbs and molests good People, more than all the sufferings and misfortunes they meet with: 'tis that which fills them with Shame and Sorrow; that interrupts the peace of their Consciences, and the quiet and repose of their Lives. Indeed, to all the faithful Servants of Christ, who truly repent and sue for his Mercy, there is no doubt but their Sins are, and shall be remitted; but the remains of Corruption will afflict and trouble them, as long as they continue in this mortal Body. But now, to be freed from this danger and disturbance, and moreover to be set quite out of the reach of it, must be a great and an happy Deliverance.

This singular kindness, Death does to all good People; they put off their Corruptions, together with their Bodies, and their Souls are advanced and confirmed in Good. Their Enemies are all vanquished, their Warfare is accomplished, and there remaineth nothing but Victory and Triumph.

In this respect what St. Paul saith, Rom. 6. 7. is true in the literal sense, *He who is dead is free from sin.*

Yet this must be understood of those who made it their Business to mortify their Corruptions, and to cleanse and purify themselves in this Life. They shall be equal to the Angels, as well in this respect, that they cannot Sin any more, as in that other that they cannot Dye any more.

But as for Wicked Persons, who carry their Corruptions alive and unmortified into the other World, 'tis very probable, that they still continue to Sin in that other state. They continue to hate God, and to blaspheme Him, and rebel against Him as far as they are Able. They take part with the Devil, who as he sinned from the Beginning, so he is like to do to the End, that is to all Eternity.

It is not so with the Children of God, whose Sins as well as their Sorrows, will be done away and extinguished by Death.

Holiness, and Purity, and Love, and Praise, and Divine Contemplation, will be the work and Business of the Heavenly State. And when the Body shall be restored to the Soul, it shall be refined and spiritualiz'd. It shall be cleans'd from its Carnal Propensities, and from all remains of Corruption. It shall not be such a Body as we are now clothed withal, which is fed and nourished by the Flesh of Beasts, and the Fruits of the Earth (the use of which shall then wholly cease) but it shall

130 *That Death is Desirable, and should*

shall be a glorified Body, radiant and resplendent, which we cannot now Describe, because it does *not yet appear what we shall be.* But this we are assured of, that when our Bodies thus Clarified, shall be united to our Souls, all Sinful motions shall cease and be extinguished. We shall never conceive an ill thought, nor speak a foolish word, nor do any wicked thing. And is not such a change highly desirable? Ought not the thoughts of it to be grateful and delightful to us?

Thus we see how far Death gratifies good People, by delivering them from every sort of Evil.

But this is not all. There is a great deal more required to entire Happiness, than only to be freed from Misery. And therefore to perfect our Happiness, Death puts good People into the actual Possession of the Divine Promises. Perhaps their Happiness may not be so full and complete during the Separation, as it will be after the Resurrection. But that makes no matter, as long as they have a sufficiency immediately after Death, and a secure and certain expectation of the Rest, which is almost equal to present Enjoyment.

The promises of God are various, and like Himself in some measure, that is, most munificently great. They are styled by St. Peter *exceeding great and precious promises*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. which will be sufficient to fill up all the parts of Happiness.

They

They comprehend Life, and Light, and Peace, and Joy, and Pleasure, and a Kingdom, and in a word, more than we know how to ask or conceive.

'Tis observable how St. James and St. John were Transported at our Saviour's Transfiguration, and with beholding Moses and Elias in their Heavenly Garb. They were so overcome with Wonder and Amazement, that they knew not what they said. They cryed, *it is good for us to be here*, and could have been contented to have stay'd there for ever. How much more will the presence of God and our Saviour, and the Emanations of the Divine Glory and Goodness, fill our Souls and all our Powers, with unspeakable sweetness and satisfaction?

To live with those whom we love, is one main Ingredient of a happy Life. And therefore to see and enjoy the Bridegroom of our Souls, whom our Souls Love, and who hath Loved and Redeemed our Souls, must be an Happiness Absolute and Complete.

Death is God's Messenger that comes to call good People to all these glorious Enjoyments, and why then should not its coming be welcome and joyous to them?

We read of divers excellent Persons, who were so far from being afraid of Death, that they have made it their wish and their choice. So did *Elijah*, 1 King, 19. 4. *He requested for himself that he might dye*, and said, *It is enough, now O Lord, take away my life, for I*

132 *That Death is Desirable, and should
am not better than my fathers.* Observe how
he Prefaceth his Request saying, it is enough,
now, O Lord. He was satisfied with this
Life and thought he had enough of it. He was
willing to depart (*ut convivae satur.* Hor.) as
a Guest that had staid long enough, and was
willing to go home.

The same in Effect, was Simeon's wish,
*Luke 2. 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant
depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy sal-
vation.* When once he had seen the Messiah
and had Him in his Arms, his Expectations
were Accomplished, and he desired to Dye.
Good Christians have much more reason to
desire it, who are instructed in his Gospel, and
thereby made acquainted with all that Grace,
and Mercy, and future Glory, which He hath
purchased and prepared for them.

We have likewise the Example of St. Paul
who is said to *desire to depart and to be with
Christ, which is far better,*

*Πολύ μάλλον
κρείσσον.* Phil. 1. 23. his expression is
remarkable, for it is by a
double comparative; as
much as to say, very much and exceedingly
better.

To depart out of this World; to be recei-
ved into the Fire of Purgatory (as the Pa-
pists fancy) is no great Invitation to make
People willing to Dye. For that would be
to remove from tolerable Troubles, into into-
lerable Torments. The flames of Purgatory
are very hot and furious, according to their
Doctrine;

Doctrine; and therein Souls may continue long enough, even to the Day of Judgment, unless they have made Provision before they Died, or their Friends on Earth, can purchase Masses for them, to help them out. But who would not depart to be with Christ, with whom full and final Glory and Happiness dwell? This was St. Paul's Doctrine and his Expectation, and it is easy to Judge, whom we may most safely follow.

Another instance we have out of *Eusebius*, who in the Life of the Emperor *Constantine*, amongst other things saith this of Him, That He did burn with the Desires of the Kingdom of Heaven. He had a Kingdom of his own, the greatest and largest in this World, but that He saw he must leave, and therefore set his Heart upon that other Kingdom, which cannot be moved, 2 Pet. I. II. even the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But contrary to this, to see People, when they are visited with Sickness, or other fore-runners of Death, to take on, and cry out, as if they were undone; is a great Disparagement to their Christian Faith and Profession. To magnify the Happiness of the other World, and yet to shrink and tremble, when we think we are approaching towards it, looks as if we meant not what we say, and were in no earnest, in what we pretend to Believe.

134 That Death is Desirable, and should

Such Behaviour is very indecent, and is a great Weakness and Infirmitie if it be not a Fault. For do we believe,

*Spei nostra & fidei
prævaricatores sumus.
Simulata, ficta, fu-
cata, videntur esse
qua dicimus. Cyr.
Serm. de Mortal.*

that Death is the Gate to Eternal Life, and shall we be afraid to enter into it? Do we believe that the Joys of Heaven are unspeakable and everlasting, and do

we complain, when we think we are going to partake of them? Do we believe that the Vision and Enjoyment of God and our Blessed Saviour, is our final Happiness, and above all other Happiness and Enjoyment, and are we unwilling to go to the Blessed Fruition? Indeed, our unworthiness consider'd alone, is enough to discourage us, but we have a greater worthiness than that of our own to trust to, and therefore our Faith should as well excite our Desires, as reprove and restrain our Fears.

To this purpose St. Jerome relates this known passage in the Life of Hilarion, who at his Departure out of this Life, expostulated thus with himself. *O my Soul why lingerest thou thus in my Body, as thou wast afraid to depart out of it? Thou hast served thy God and Saviour so many years, and art thou now afraid to go unto Him? Egredere Anima mea, Egredere? go forth my Soul, go forth.*

You who are Aged, if you have such Ardent Faith and Christian Courage as you ought, have a peculiar Advantage above other People. You are advanced very near to that blef-
sed

fed Life, and to that immortal Happiness, which is the end of your Faith and Hope. You have Travelled through the great Wilderness, and are come almost to the Borders of *Canaan*. You have therefore reason to thank God and to take Comfort, as the Seasons pass away, and to say, Blessed be God, I am come so much nearer to my rest, and at the Turn of the Year. Blessed be God, I have one Year less to abide in my Pilgrimage, and am come so much nearer my Country and my Father's House. Such Carriage better becomes good People, than to see them over concern'd at the Warnings and Apprehensions of Death.

'Tis certainly a fault in it self, and a discouragement to others, when they see us so backward to embrace that, which we so much magnify and extol. It begets Suspicion in them, when they perceive we are not alike Affected towards these great things of the other World, as we are wont to be in other the like Cases.

In other Cases, where Profit or Advancement is Propounded, we are ready and forward to embrace it, and to long for the Occasions that are like to produce it.

Does not the Heir who is a Minor, long till he comes of Age that he may be Master of his Estate? and do not the Bridegroom and the Bride wish for the Day of their Espousals? and is not the Labourer desirous of the Shadows of the Evening, when he may

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receive his Wages, and repose his weary Limbs: and why should not good Christians rejoyce, and lift up their Heads when the Day of their Redemption draws so very nigh? Here they are in their Minority, but Death puts them into the Possession of the promised Inheritance. Here they Love the Bridegroom of their Souls, but there they shall Enjoy Him and be United to Him. Here they Labour and serve, and are contented with mean Entertainment, but there they shall Reigh and Rejoyce, and their Joy shall be full.

Good Christians have therefore the greatest Reason to Correct and Repress their Fears. And as their Death and Dissolution is accompanied with the highest and most comfortable Expectations, so they should welcome it with answerable Affections. The greatness of the Change may make it seem Awful, but it ought by no means, to seem grievous or formidable to any good Christian.

In other Cases, where Profit or Advancement is Propounded, we are ready and forward to embrace it, and to long for the Occasions that are like to produce it.

Does not the Heir who is a Minor long till he comes of Age that he may be Master of his Estate? and do not the Bridegroom of his Bride wish for the Day of their Marriage? and is not the Labourer desirous of the Shadow of the Evening, when he may

PRAYERS referring to the Preceding Chapters.

The First Prayer.

Relating to the Chapter concerning Renovation and Amendment.

HAVING wearied my self in my own Ways, and being convinced of the Folly and Danger of them, I come unto Thee, Blessed Lord, to resign and give up my self, to walk in Thy Ways, which are the Ways of Life and Peace.

I confess I have done very Unjustly and Ungratefully all this while, in departing from Thee, and neglecting Thy Service. I bewail my Wretchedness, and am refreshed by Thy gracious Assistance, never any more to do as I have done. I know Thou hatest Iniquity, (with which my past Life hath so much Abounded) and now I see just cause to hate and abhor it likewise. I am convinced that it is the Stain of my Life, and the Bane of my Happiness and my Peace, and shall I any longer addict my self to it? God forbid. I renounce from my Heart, every corrupt Principle and Opinion, that is contrary to Truth and Godliness; and every corrupt Practice, that is inconsistent with my Christian Duty and Profession. Sin shall no

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longer Reign in my Mortal Body, that I should obey it in the Lusts thereof, Rom. 6. 12. I protest and declare open Enmity against every thing that Opposeth Thy Just and Sovereign Authority. I will subdue my Will to Thy Holy Will; and all my Passions and Appetites, to the Obedience of thy pure and holy Laws. I will not allow my self to do as it pleaseth me, but as Thou pleasest, and as Thou hast commanded me. I bid adieu to Sensuality and Worldly Lusts, and will ever deny my self, that I may obey and please Thee my God and Saviour. I solemnly devote my self, to walk before Thee in all Honesty, Purity, Sobriety and Godliness. I humbly desire, that the new Creature may be formed in me; and that putting off the Old Man, which is Corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, I may be renewed in the Spirit of my Mind, and may put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness, and true Holiness, Eph. 4. 22, 23.

Accept O Lord, I beseech Thee, of these my unfeigned Desires; and be pleas'd so to strengthen and confirm them by thy Grace, that they may be effectual to all the purposes of good Living. I humbly Dedicate my whole Man, and my whole Life unto Thee, and I beseech Thee so to fix these Intentions and Resolutions, that I may persist in them to my lives end, which I humbly beg, of thy gracious Goodness, for his sake, who came to call Sinners to Repentance, Jesus Christ my only Saviour and Redeemer, Amen. Our Father, &c.

The

The Second Prayer.

Relating to the Chapter, of the great Danger
Aged People are in without speedy Amend-
ment.

O God who art the Supreme Happiness of
Souls ; in whose Favour is Life, and in
whose presence is fulness of Joy, I bewail my
wretchedness, in having been so long a Stran-
ger to Thee, and an Enemy to my own Happi-
ness.

I have been often told out of thy Word, of
the Wisdom of considering my latter end, and of
the Rewards and Punishments of the World to
come ; and yet I have heard these things, for
the most part, only as words of course, without
being duly concern'd at them, or laying them
deeply to Heart.

Blessed be Thy Name, that I have a little
Time still left, to consider my Interest and my
Danger. Oh give me a Wise and Understand-
ing Heart, to discern what I ought to do in re-
spect of both. Surely it is my chiefest Interest
to be saved, and no Danger can be so great as
that of falling into everlasting Misery. I trust
I am yet by Thy Mercy in a capacity of being
sav'd? O let me not any longer Delay or Deli-
berate about it? Lord, help me to use my Sen-
ses and my Reason aright, that I may resolutely
break through all Opposition, to obtain this ne-
cessary End. That I may never suffer my self
to be deprived of such glorious Hopes, for any
little

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little, base Satisfactions, that the World, or my own Corruptions may propound to me.

And to hasten my Flight out of Sodom, help me to consider the Danger of continuing in it. If I continue in Sin, I must expect a shower of Fire and Brimstone; nay, I cannot avoid dwelling with everlasting burnings. O God, I beseech Thee, awaken my Senseless, Drowsy Mind, that I may foresee and avoid such Intolerable Miseries, before I drop into them. I have been desperately negligent a great while, and I know not how soon Thou mayst call me to an Account. Oh help me to Redeem the little Time and those few Days which remain, that I may not languish out a dismal Eternity, in bewailing my Madness, that I might have been Happy and would not, but may for ever bless Thee for thy Patience and long-Suffering towards me, and may make such a good Use of it, that it may prove to be my Salvation. That I may no longer sleep in Sin and Security, as I have done so many Years, but may now awake and arise to newness of Life. That in Remembrance of my former Negligence, I may now make haste to keep thy Commandments, and may give such Diligence, to add one Grace and Virtue to another, that I may yet become perfectly acquainted with them all. Without Holiness, no Man can see or enjoy Thy presence, and therefore I beseech Thee assist me, to Labour the more earnestly, that I may make some good Progress therein. Let me not be so vain, as to think of receiving the Prize,

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Prize, without running the Race; or of Reaping the Harvest, without sowing good Seed, or of Inheriting the Kingdom without behaving my self as thy Child; but that I may bestir my self, according to my Hopes and Expectations, and may yet finish the Work which Thou hast Appointed for me.

But still I will depend upon thy Mercy, more than my own Endeavours. For Thou givest the reward to those who come late into Thy Vineyard, even because Thou art a most Bountiful and Gracious Lord. Deal so with thy Servant, O Lord, and the less I deserve, the more I will Adore and Love. I will magnify Thy Mercies towards me, and never cease to give Thanks and Praise unto Thee, World without End, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Our Father, &c.

The

The Third Prayer.

Relating to the Chapter of Man's Frailty and Mortality.

O God who hast made the days of my Pilgrimage upon earth few and Evil, help me to make the best Use of my Frail Condition.

Let the fewness of my Days teach me not to be fond or over desirous of any Earthly Goods, which I know I must shortly leave; and let the Evil which attends them make me the more willing to quit this Life, and the more careful to make Provision for a better. That I may not look upon my self as at home, or set my Heart upon any of these Things, but may quietly pass by them, and press forward towards that glorious Prize, which thou hast set before us.

I see as well by the Daily Example of others, as by the Weaknesses and Decays that are growing on my self, that I have not long here to continue; my Days are like a Shadow that Declineth, and I begin to be withered like Grass, *Psal. 102. 11.* I know that Thou wilt bring me to Death, and to the House appointed for all Living, *Job 30. 23.* O Lord, I submit to thy just Sentence, and am contented to undergo the Penalty of my Sinful Nature.

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The shortness of my Time here shall not grieve me, because I discern a longer Life, even a Life of Immortality after Death. Tho' I carry about with me a poor Corruptible Body, yet Thou hast endued me with a precious Immortal Soul, that shall endure for ever. The better part of me shall last longer than these Heavens and Earth, which we here behold.

Blessed be Thy Name, that Thou hast given me such a Treasure in my Bosom. Oh give me that Wisdom and Religious care, that I may never forfeit or lose the Happiness of it. The Endless Duration of that better part, shall more than make Amends for all my present Frailties and Infirmities.

It rejoyceth my Heart, that Thou hast given me that Comfortable Assurance out of Thy Word, that my being shall never Fail or Perish. That notwithstanding the Decays of my Body, and all the Changes and Chances of this Mortal Life, I shall ever remain what I am, in an everlasting Capacity of Loving and Enjoying Thee my God and Saviour. And that even this poor Body, which is the Subject of so many Sufferings and Miseries, shall be Immortalized and Re-united to my Soul in a never Dying Life.

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What Glorious Discoveries are these! How precious are the Thoughts of them? They are more Joyous and Delightful to me, than all I here Possess or Enjoy.

And forasmuch as I know not the Day of my Death, help me ever to be in a Readiness against the Approaches of it. That I may take heed to my self, lest at any Time my Heart be over-charged, with Surfeiting, and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon me un-awares, but that I may Watch and be Sober, Luke 21. 34. and be found employed about my Master's Business at his coming.

That I may not Labour only for the Things which I must leave behind me, but may bestow the best of my Care and Endeavours, upon that which I may carry away with me when I Dye, even a good Conscience, and the Remembrance of having served Thee, by doing good.

I have now resolved on a Religious Course of Life, and bound my self with Purposes and Resolutions to that End. Lord, strengthen me with thy Grace, and stablish me with thy free Spirit, that I may effectually perform what I have Resolved and Promised. Let me Remember that I am cleansed
from

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from my old Sins, and let me Abhor to Pollute
my self anew.

I am in good part gotten out of the Fire,
Ob let me not be so Mad as to run into it
again, lest Thou in Thy just Displeasure
cast me into Hell, that Fire which shall
never be quenched. It would be Wicked-
ness inexcusable, to return with the Dog
to his Vomit again, and with the Sow
that was washed, to her wallowing in the
Mire.

I trust therefore through thy Help and
Goodness, that I shall continue thine for
ever, and that the nearer I approach to my
End, the faster I shall move towards Thee,
as towards the blessed Center of my Soul,
with whom I hope to find Eternal Rest for
my Soul, for the sake of my only Saviour
and Redeemer Christ Jesus. Amen. Our
Father, &c.

The Fourth Prayer.

Relating to the last Chapter.

O God, the Supreme and Almighty Being, who art the Author of all Being and of all Good, let thy Name be Worshipped, Adored and Praised for evermore.

There is nothing in Heaven or Earth that I desire in comparison of Thee, Psal. 73. 25. who art the Strength and Comfort of my Life, and the Hope of my Death, and my Portion for ever.

The little Happiness I enjoy here, ariseth from the assured Belief of thy gracious Presence with me, and Providence over me; and without Thee, this World would be a Desolate Wilderness, in which I would not desire to Live, But Thou hast prepared another better World, wherein Thou wilt exhibit thy glorious Beatifical Presence to thy Servants, and there Thou wilt make them as Happy, as their Hearts and Capacities can hold. O God, let the Sense of that excellent Glory and Blessedness attract my Heart, and fill me with longing desires after it.

And because no Man can see thy Face and live, Exod. 33. 20. I beseech Thee make me willing and ready to Dye, that I may enjoy that Glorious and Blessed Vision. That is infinitely better than many such Worlds as this, and all the good things they can afford. Oh draw up my Soul towards those Heavenly Enjoyments,

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joyments, that I may the more willingly relinquish these poor Dependencies. I would take in as little as I can of these muddy earthly Joys, that I may reserve my Soul to drink of the Well of Life, and of the River of thy Pleasures, Psal. 36. 8. who would not Dye to come unto Thee, whose Favour and Enjoyment is better than Life?

Help me I beseech Thee to overcome all my weak fears, and to make haste with Joy and Gladness, when Thou shalt call me, to meet the Bridegroom of my Soul. I desire to wait patiently for thy Order and Command, but then Oh let me cheerfully forgo every thing to come unto Thee. Thou wilt make thy Servants Kings and Priests and they shall reign for ever and ever, Rev. 22. 5. Oh let me willingly and joyfully leave this poor Cottage of Earth, that I may be admitted into the Heavenly Court, and partake of the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God. Help me to Realize all Thy Promises, and all the Glorious Objects of my Faith and Hope; and let them strike so powerfully upon my Heart and Thoughts, that all other Things may seem mean and vile in comparison of them. That the view and foresight of those Divine Pleasures may take up and satisfy my Heart, and make me contented with modest and moderate Allowances here.

Blessed be Thy Name that I have lived till I am thus disposed to Dye, and I trust am in some measure prepared for it; that the Corruptions of my Nature are subdued and mortified, and that seriousness and consideration have made my Will more pliable to thy Grace. That

That is the truest Satisfaction and Solace of my Age, that I now live unto God, and that my Follies and Corruptions Languish and Dye before me. Blessed be Thy Name, that I am come within so near a Prospect of the Heavenly Canaan, after my long and tedious Travel in this Wilderness. My Foot shall enter into Jordan when Thou orderest me, and O Lord, be Thou pleased to make my passage safe over, That after I have passed the Waves of this troublesome World, I may come to the Land of everlasting Life, there to Reign with Thee World without end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Even so come Lord Jesus. Amen.

O Ur Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven; Give us this Day our daily Bread, and Forgive us our Trespases, as we Forgive them that Trespase against us; And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.



F I N I S.

